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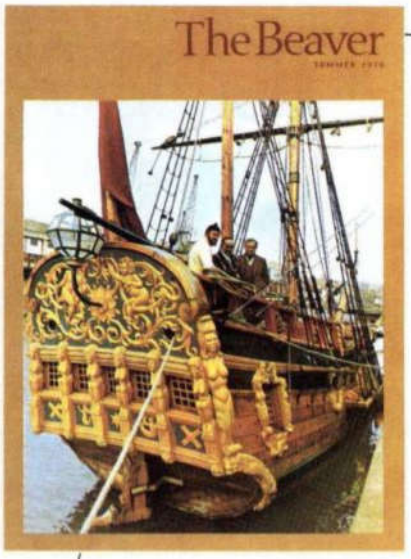
The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

The Hellish Highways
Upper Canada Preserved
Tragedy of White Bird



The Beaver

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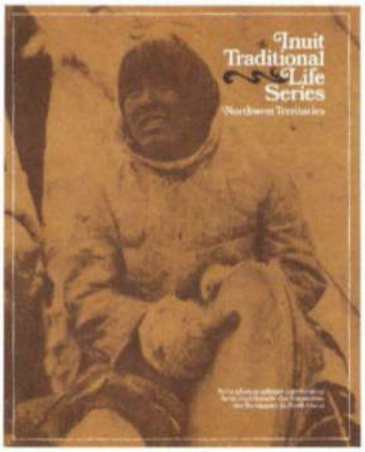

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The Beaver

EXPLORING · CANADA'S · HISTORY

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Part of the Oral Tradition

What is a folk song? Many of the songs sung at "folk festivals" were written by the people who sing them and are not, in the purest sense of the term, folk songs at all. A true folk song might be described as a song that has been handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth and with changes and variations until nobody can remember exactly where and how it originated. A folk song is like a saying; it seems always to have been there.

Every folk song, in fact, began somewhere. Far back or not so far back somebody composed the tune and fitted words to it. The tune that came down to us may not be exactly the same tune and the words may have altered out of all recognition, but every song collected by Edith Fowke, Cecil Sharpe or Percy Grainger began somewhere and came to us over a long or short road.

Some folk songs began as music-hall ditties in the nineteenth century. Many were popular songs in the eighteenth century. Others go back far in time and may have been sung by knights going off to the crusades. Songs lost in their land of origin have often survived in remote areas of North America and songs thought to be ancient have occasionally proven to be quite modern. Old hymns have been reprised as union anthems and bawdy catches from the age of Charles II have been transformed into pure love songs.

It may well be that "folk songs" composed last week to be sung at next summer's "folk festivals" will pass into the common memory and be "collected" a century on by some earnest folklorist to whom the name "Gordon Lightfoot" will be completely unknown.

Sometimes, as a matter of fact, it takes less than a century for a new song or a new version of an old song to become public property. Take, for example, the case of a song called *Forty Below*, a frequently performed and recorded variation on the old song *Red River Valley*.

It is a sobering experience to become a part — even a small part — of the national oral tradition. To become one with "Anon.", that prolific writer of songs, poems and doggerel, brings on a feeling of great solemnity. It happened to me — as it happens to everyone — quite by accident.

In my green youth — the year was 1959 and I was in my early twenties — I was the author of a daily column that appeared on the "second front" page of the *Winnipeg Free Press* under the title "Coffee Break by Wink". The column was a compendium of bits and pieces of news and gossip, attempts at satirical humour and accounts of events in the lives of a group of fictitious characters invented by me. It was fairly silly stuff and it gave a lot of people a pain in the neck, but it did no real harm and I only blush slightly when I think about it today, over 30 years later. At the time I resented having to use a *nom-de-plume*. Looking back, I am grateful to the editor who decided that my ramblings would remain anonymous.

The Coffee Break column for Saturday, 30 May, 1959 (I have the brittle and yellowing clipping before me now) contained some comic verses about the unpredictable and often disappointing Manitoba climate set

to the tune of *Red River Valley*, which appears as #52 in Edith Fowke's *Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs* identified as an authentic Red River Settlement folk song and not an American import as was once supposed.

The spring of 1959 had been, as I recall, an unsatisfactory one as far as the weather was concerned. After the custom of Manitoba springs, it had featured recurring cold weather, snow, blustery days and April showers that had turned to ice. We were all feeling gloomy and even the prospect of a Royal Visit provided little consolation. In a black mood I sat down and wrote a parody of *Red River Valley* for the school children of Manitoba to sing to the Queen when she arrived in July. I love Manitoba, but there are moments when I would gladly give it back to the buffalo. Every Manitoban has felt that way on occasion.

The chorus of the song went as follows:

For it's forty below in the winter,
And it's twenty below in the fall,
It just rises to zero in summer,
And we don't have a springtime at all.

A few weeks after the column for 30 May 1959 was published I left the newspaper for an extended tour of Europe, leaving Winnipeg on the day of the Royal Visit.

Later, in Paris, I fell in with a group of British folk singers and in one of the more romantic episodes of my youth I joined in the chorus and passed the hat for donations on the Pont des Arts.

A year or two later one of the folk singers, Alec Campbell, turned up in Winnipeg and appeared for some weeks as resident entertainer in a bar near the University of Manitoba. During his Winnipeg visit he asked me for a Canadian song to add to his repertoire and I typed up my *Red River Valley* parody and gave it to him. He performed it in Winnipeg and later in Toronto when he did a stint in a Yorkville coffee house. Almost a decade later a Vancouver dentist wrote to tell me that he had heard the song performed — and attributed to me — at the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen by the same Alec Campbell, who was, by then, a regular on the international folk music circuit.

After that the song and I went our separate ways. I spent several years in Vancouver and thought no more of the snowy springtimes of Manitoba.

In the early 1980s I returned to Winnipeg and one evening I turned on my television and got a surprise. The program that came on was a concert given by local talent in honour of the Queen, who was visiting the city. As the sound came up I thought the song that was being sung sounded vaguely familiar and then I realized that it was my old friend, the 1959 parody of *Red River Valley*.

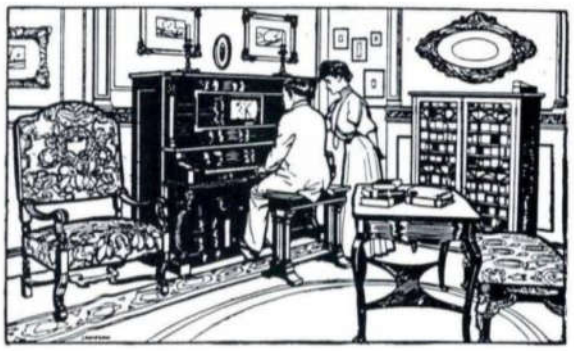
Since then the song has surfaced on several occasions and friends often tell me that they have heard it performed on CBC radio. Recently I was told it had been recorded on a compact disc by a group of children's entertainers from Toronto.

My wife, who is good at tracking things down, decided to find out where my song had been all these years and what it had been up to. She is an efficient sleuth and soon discovered that school children across the nation have been singing it — singly and in choirs — for some years. It is included, under the title *Forty Below* in a song book produced for use in schools and is attributed to our old friend "Anon." A couple of the best verses are missing and the unknown writer is said to be a Winnipegger of the 1920s — or possibly the 1890s.

The song now known as *Forty Below* is over 30 years old, but it hardly qualifies as one of the ancient airs and dances. It is hardly old enough to be found in *Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* or any of the old ballad collections. I am happy, however, to see it described as a "Canadian folk song". I wrote it in less than 30 minutes. It has taken me over 30 years to catch up with it.

A professional folk-song collector in Vancouver recently suggested that I take out some sort of copyright on the lyrics to ensure the payment of royalties, but I have decided to hold off. After all, it is not likely to make enough to keep me like Irving Berlin in my old age and it should be reward enough to know that after a lifetime of earnest effort at the typewriter the result of an idle half-hour is likely to outlive me. It is an honour to be a colleague, however humble, of the authors of *Western Wind* and *Blue Tail Fly*.

The "authentic" version of *Forty Below* goes as follows:



FORTY BELOW

From this valley we hope to be going,
When at last we can travel alone,
For we're sick of the snow and the dust storms,
In Toronto we'll find a new home.

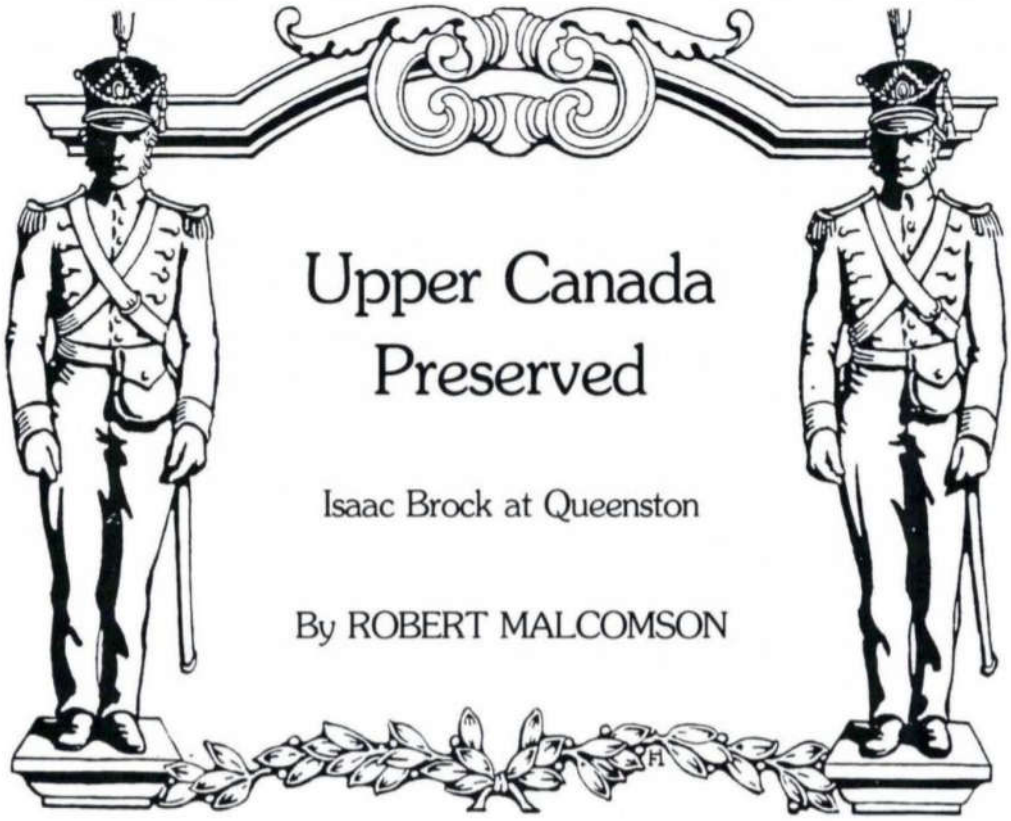
Refrain:
For it's forty below in the winter,
And it's twenty below in the fall.
It just rises to zero in summer,
And we don't have a springtime at all.

Oh my Grandpa came West in the eighties,
To the prairies where grain grew like grass,
But the Wheat Board and freight rates got Grandpa,
and Grandpa went East, second class.

It was raining and snowing this morning,
At the corner of Portage and Main,
Now its noon and the dust storm is blowing,
And my basement is flooded again.

Then come pay for my fare if you love me,
And I'll hasten to bid you adieu,
So goodbye to the Red River Valley,
And the farmers all shivering and blue.

— **Christopher Dafoe**



Upper Canada Preserved

Isaac Brock at Queenston

By ROBERT MALCOMSON

On the night before he died Isaac Brock assembled his staff officers at the government house in the village of Newark. He wanted them to hear the report of Captain Thomas Evans who had been sent earlier that day, Monday, 12 October 1812, to investigate a potential uprising in a company of the 49th Regiment stationed at Queenston. Evans had also been ordered to cross the Niagara River to the American village of Lewiston and make arrangements for the exchange of British soldiers and sailors captured two days before at Fort Erie. While performing those duties Evans had been subject to a hail of musket balls fired into Queenston from the American shore. The undisciplined American troops even continued their harassment when Evans boarded a canoe to cross over the river.

At the Lewiston ferry dock Evans was confronted by a sentry who forbade him entry to the camp of American Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer, as Evans had done frequently before on diplomatic business. Already insulted by this behaviour, the captain became apprehensive of the situation he viewed during the three hours he waited for an answer to his queries. To Brock and the others Evans described the signs of preparations for invasion, "their boats slung in the sides or fissures on the river bank covered only by the brush, with indeed many decided indications that an attack on our shores could not be prudently delayed for a single day."

Present during the meeting were Brock's aides-de-camp, Captain John Glegg of the 49th, militia Lieutenant Colonel John Macdonell and, probably, Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe, Brock's second in command, although the records of the day do not mention him. Glegg and Macdonell called Thomas Evans' prediction of an imminent attack "over-sanguine". Brock, too, was sceptical, but he nevertheless took Evans aside to discuss the matter privately. In the end the general decided that an immediate call-up of local militia was prudent and gave orders to that effect.

Ever since Isaac Brock had returned to the Niagara Peninsula from his victory at Detroit two months before, the likelihood of an invasion at some point along the Niagara River had grown. As that threat was increased by the growing number of American militia and regular regiments, Brock stretched his thin red line among the probable crossing points at Fort Erie, Chippewa and Queenston. Companies of the 31st and 49th Regiments, reinforced with militiamen from Lincoln, York and Niagara, manned lightly-armed batteries and kept their eyes on the American shore for signs of movement. Brock's main force, more than 450 men of the 41st and other regiments, plus more militiamen and Mohawk warriors under Captain John Norton, was housed at Fort George, where the general and most of his officers thought the enemy was eventually bound to make any serious attempt at invasion. Brock was eager to go on the offensive against the Americans,

The view from Queenston Heights: the town and the Niagara River, from "Picturesque Canada", 1882.

but his ever-cautious commander-in-chief, Governor General Sir George Prevost, maintained a strict defensive policy.

An attack on Fort George might have been undertaken by the Americans had developments along their front not frustrated it. The commander of the American forces, Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer, was a militia officer who had never before been involved in a battlefield action. His selection the previous July as head of the Army of the Centre had been largely due to the fact that no other officer of suitable rank was available. The notion that the conquest of Canada was just a matter of marching was still popular among some statesmen in Washington; even a novice, given enough men, was considered capable of humiliating the British. The shocking surrender of revolutionary war veteran General William Hull at Detroit on 16 August was not enough to dampen such nationalistic over-confidence. Van Rensselaer arrived on the Niagara frontier within days of Hull's defeat and it soon became obvious that one of his duties would be to erase the ignominy of that episode by seizing the Niagara Peninsula.

Thousands of regular and militia troops were mobilized for service under Van Rensselaer. Brigadier General Alexander Smyth arrived to command a brigade of 1,650 regulars collected at Black Rock. Assorted militia regiments, comprising nearly 1,700 men under Brigadier General William Wadsworth, moved into the main camp at Lewiston. At nearby Fort Niagara 550 regulars were stationed with Lieutenant Colonel John Fenwick. Lieutenant Colonel John Christie and 350 men of the 13th Regiment reached Fort Niagara on 10 October. Other detachments of regulars and militia manned key positions at Forts Niagara and Schlosser and at Buffalo. A new battery named Fort Gray that mounted four cannon, two 18-pounders and two 6-pounders was built on the edge of the escarpment above Lewiston.

But men and guns were not enough to breed success, for a lack of discipline and dedication to the cause pervaded the American ranks. The troops used any excuse to fire their muskets and gave little thought to proper sanitary routines. Men who had been called up months before threatened to desert as soon as their terms of service ended. At night they were left to their own devices when their officers left the camps for more comfortable accommodation. Sickness prevailed in the unhealthy surroundings, but medical supplies were scant. The few horses that were available lacked proper forage. The reinforcements arrived without suitable clothing and with demands to receive their wages.

Canadian War Museum

Major General Sir Isaac Brock, by J.W.L. Foster.

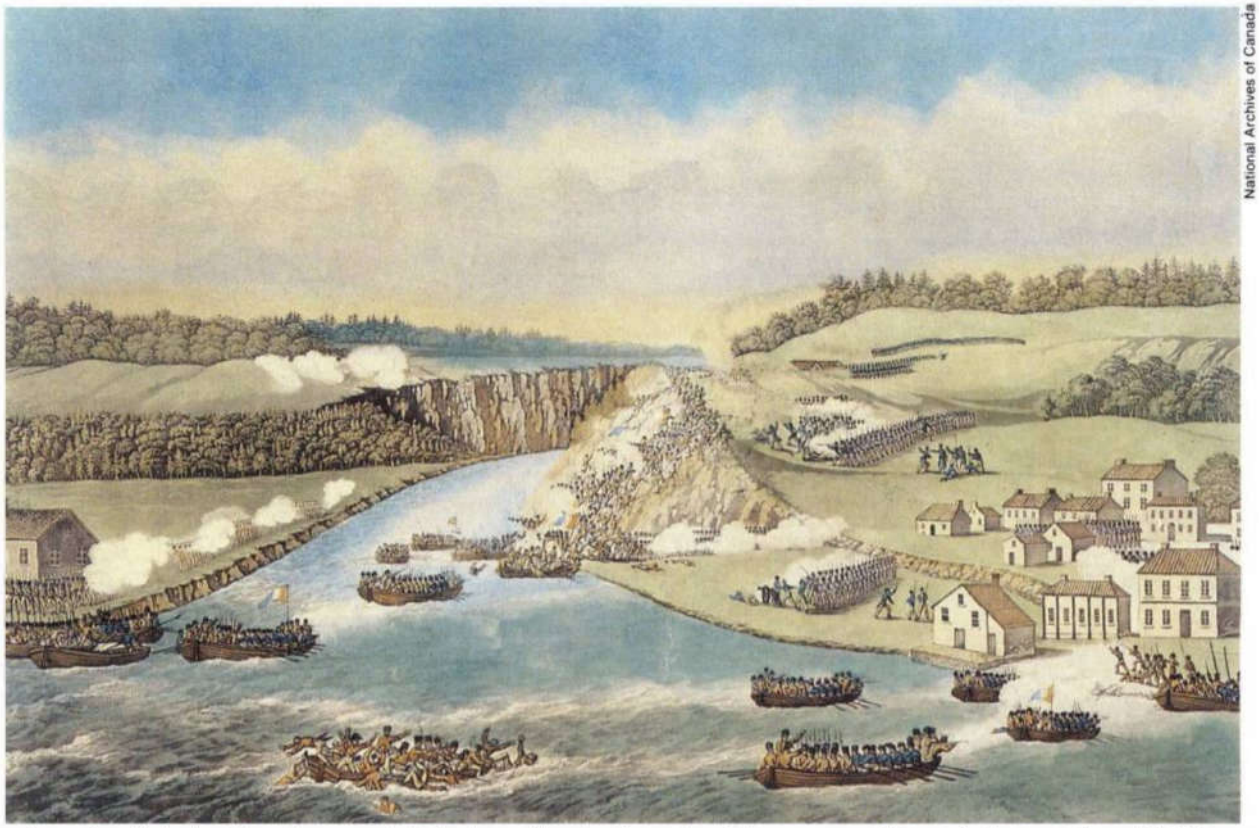
Instead of organizing an adequate system of supply, Quartermaster General Peter B. Porter spread politically-fueled dissension among the ranks, much of it directed at Stephen Van Rensselaer and his staff. Painfully aware of these circumstances, Major General Van Rensselaer struggled to formulate a plan of attack against the British. His first scheme was to do as Isaac Brock expected, namely make a diversion at Queenston, before attacking Fort George directly. Brigadier General Alexander Smyth had been ordered by Washington to co-operate with Van Rensselaer, but when asked to attend a meeting at Lewiston to discuss the battle plan Smyth found one excuse or another to ignore the request from an officer in the militia. The clamour for action spread along the frontier and Van Rensselaer finally responded to it by ordering his chief aide, and kinsman, Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer, to lead an attack upon Queenston. A torrential rain storm struck on 10 October and poured down upon the troops assembled for embarkation. Hours went by before the assault was called off; the boats needed to cross the river were ready, but their oars had been stored in a single bateau, which had mysteriously disappeared down the river under the command of a disaffected lieutenant.

At the time that Thomas Evans attempted to visit his camp on 12 October Van Rensselaer was busily organizing a new attempt on Queenston. Again he informed General Smyth of his intentions, but received an ambiguous reply mentioning the possibility of a march in a day or two. The loyal Colonel Van Rensselaer volunteered to lead 300 militia men in the first wave of attackers and rode to Fort Niagara to enlist the help of Lieutenant-Colonel John Christie. Christie's men were exhausted from their recent trek and Christie himself was reluctant to be subordinate to a militia colonel, but finally agreed to lead 300 of his troops in co-operation with Van Rensselaer. Within hours they were marching up the muddy road to Lewiston where they arrived after dark. Meanwhile four companies of New York militia from Brigadier General Wadsworth's brigade numbering about 700 in strength began to move toward the ferry dock.

Just before four o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, 13 October the first wave of Van Rensselaer and Christie's forces embarked. No more than thirteen boats, capable of holding 25 men each, were available. Thirty-nine other large boats, which John Christie's regiment had brought from Oswego, lay unused close to Fort Niagara, but Stephen Van Rensselaer's frantic planning had overlooked them and an even larger number of boats that might have been transported overland from Fort Schlosser. The flotilla cast off into the predawn darkness on their mission to capture Upper Canada.

From his vantage point at Fort Gray, Major John Lovett, one of the militia officers who had been with Stephen Van Rensselaer from the beginning of the campaign, looked down upon the boats crossing the swirling Niagara. The river was more than 200 metres wide at that point. As it poured out from the confines of the gorge the Niagara's crashing rapids were replaced with deceptively placid-looking eddies and counter-currents. Experienced rivermen had been found to pilot the invasion craft, which were soon under fire. "The movement was instantly discovered," wrote Major Lovett, "the [British] shore was one incessant blaze of musketry; three batteries pelted upon the boats. My battery pelted alternately upon the batteries and upon musketry on shore, . . . In a word the scene was tremendous. The boats were a little embarrassed, but Colonel Van Rensselaer made good his landing in a perfect sheet of fire."

The British were ready, due to the explicit orders Thomas Evans had issued the day before. Two companies of the 49th Regiment were stationed at Queenston; Captain James Dennis's grenadiers were garrisoned in a stone guardhouse in the village, while the light company under Captain John Williams was encamped atop the escarpment. Members from as many as four militia companies supported the regulars, bringing the aggregate to about 300 men. Three pieces



National Archives of Canada

James Dennis' sketch of the various events in the battle contributed to the creation of this panorama with its misleading proportion and details.

of ordnance were in place. An 18-pounder long gun was mounted behind an arrow-shaped embankment, known as a redan battery, on the edge of the escarpment midway between the summit and the village. A six-pounder brass field gun was operated by Dennis's men near their guardhouses and a 24-pounder was situated at Vrooman's Point, the first bend in the river below Queenston.

Captains Dennis and Williams had kept their companies and the militiamen at arms through the night, so that when the first enemies were discerned approaching through the darkness they were met with disciplined and effective musketry. This hail of fire led to the "embarrassment" of several of the bateaux, which drifted out of control, filled with the dead, the wounded and the panic-stricken. Just below the imposing home of the Hamilton family, situated on the edge of the lofty riverbank, three boats came to ground and were assailed by a party of regulars and militia who slaughtered most of the soldiers and captured the rest. Another craft took a direct hit from Dennis's six-pounder and suffered fifteen casualties. Two boats came ashore, whereupon the soldiers immediately surrendered. Lieutenant Colonel John Christie was experiencing frustration as he watched all this happening. His boat was rendered unmanageable at midstream by a broken oarlock and a cowardly pilot, who barely managed to get the vessel back to the friendly shore well down the river. While the pilot fled, Christie gathered his men and raced on foot back to the embarkation point.

Despite the severity of the defensive fire Colonel Van Rensselaer landed on the Canadian shore and disembarked successfully. As planned, the boatmen returned to Lewiston to ferry across a second wave of invaders. Van Rensselaer mustered his men for a frontal attack upon the village, but the steep riverbank made that manoeuvre difficult and the fusillade of musketry turned the Americans back to the beach. Only about 200 men had succeeded in joining the colonel and they soon found themselves leaderless, as Van Rensselaer suffered no fewer than six wounds to his legs and, after trying to urge his men forward, collapsed. The surviving Americans huddled against the bank, waiting for another wave of invaders to join them.

The thunderous concussions of sound at Queenston travelled quickly to the headquarters of Isaac Brock at Newark. Awakened from his slumber, Brock realized immediately that Thomas Evans' foreboding had been justified. Something was afoot at Queenston and the general was eager to know its extent. Within min-

utes he left the government house in full uniform and mounted his horse for the ride up the river. Before leaving he gave orders that the artillery unit under Captain William Holcroft and a party of Mohawk warriors under Captain John Norton follow in his tracks while the main body of the 41st Regiment be kept at the fort in case the action at Queenston was only a feint meant to cover a concentrated attack on Newark. Brock galloped away into the gloomy morning, while his aides, Macdonell and Glegg, hurriedly prepared to take horse in pursuit of him.

As the obscure glow of a new day filtered through the grey cloud cover Isaac Brock made his famous last ride to Queenston. Forty-three years old and a soldier for all but fifteen of those years, he had only lately covered himself in glory with the defeat of General Hull at Detroit. In recognition of that feat Brock had been declared a Knight of the Bath on 9 October by the Prince Regent, but news of that honour would not reach Upper Canada for many weeks. Fame had been long in coming to Brock. His early promotions had been purchased and over the years he had taken part in only two major actions; one in Holland in 1799 and the second while aboard the British fleet when Horatio Nelson used perseverance and a blind eye to win the day at Copenhagen in 1801. The next year Brock had gone to Canada as a lieutenant colonel with the 49th Regiment. For ten years he served at various posts in the provinces frequently complaining to his brothers about being kept from the honourable fight against Napoleon. The long-awaited permission to return to England finally came early in 1812, but Brock decided that he was duty-bound to remain in Canada where the conditions all pointed toward a war with the United States. The success at Detroit had sweetened the flavour of that decision, but Brock still longed for distant fields of glory. Less than a month before fate carried him to Queenston he had written to one of his brothers: "I am quite anxious for this state of warfare to end, as I much wish to join Lord Wellington and to see you all."

Along the ten kilometre road to Queenston Isaac Brock charged, passing a group of York militiamen who had left their ineffective battery at Brown's Point to reinforce their embattled compatriots. Brock called to the Yorks to hurry on and galloped off. Within minutes he arrived at the village. Eyewitness reports of Brock's final movements lack detail about his first moments on the scene of the battle. Undoubtedly, he located Captain James Dennis in order to obtain infor-

According to one source Brock's dying words were "Push on York Volunteers". Captain John Glegg informed the general's brothers that his final utterance had been "My fall must not be noticed or impede my brave companions from advancing to victory". Given the nature of his wound, it is quite likely that he said nothing at all. The painting is by J.D. Kelly, 1896.

"Push on York Volunteers!"

Photo by Robert Malcomson

Following his death Brock's coat was preserved for posterity. An arrow points to the fatal bullet hole.

mation about the state of things. He probably sought out a place from which to view the position of the American invaders, but whether he went to the redan battery or the grenadier's stone guardhouse or the grounds of the Hamilton house is uncertain. What does appear to be true is that, about the time Brock arrived at Queenston, four boatloads of American reinforcements were seen to be quickly approaching the British shore. The peal of a bugle was heard in the village and Captain Williams' light company descended from its station at the top of the escarpment to bolster the troops below. Again, it is not clear from first-hand accounts whether Brock or James Dennis issued the order for the relocation of the light company, but the decision was fateful, for the tide of battle soon shifted to favour the Americans.

Pinned down on the beach, with Solomon Van Rensselaer unconscious from his wounds and other officers dead or wounded, the Americans had few options. Leadership devolved onto the shoulders of Captains Peter Ogilvie and John Wool from Christie's 13th Regiment. Rather than wait for death or surrender, Wool, bleeding from a musket wound in his buttocks, and Ogilvie decided to attempt a flanking manoeuvre. They led 60 men a short distance upriver along the face of the gorge to a narrow path that scaled the vegetation-covered rock wall. Up the path the Americans climbed until they reached the summit and found it deserted. When a sufficient number had reached the top, the men formed into position and charged down upon the redan battery. The gun crew was put to flight and control of the crest of the escarpment passed into American hands.

During the time that Wool and Ogilvie sought the means to outflank the British, reinforcements were slowly making their way across the river. Lieutenant Colonel Christie had reached the embarkation point at Lewiston and discovered that pandemonium prevailed. No one appeared to be in charge; Major General Van Rensselaer had yet to make his appearance. Only a handful of boats were available for ferrying more troops across. Officers complained loudly about a lack of ammunition and support. Blasts of British grape shot pelted into the landing area, forcing at least one company to retreat from the crowded dock. Christie stamped about waiting his turn to enter the fight.

Around that time, between one and two hours after dawn, the single most memorable moment of the day was played out: Brock met his glorious demise. One account claims that the general, on foot with a small band of soldiers, attacked Wool's men as soon as they captured the redan battery, but was driven back. A detailed view of the event was given by George Jarvis, a volunteer with the light company, who was present on the north side of the village when Brock rode up attended by Glegg and Macdonell. As Jarvis recollected: "He was loudly cheered as he cried: 'Follow me, boys!' and led us at a pretty smart trot towards the mountain; checking his horse to a walk, he said, 'Take breath, boys, we shall want it in a few mintues!' "

After a brief rest Brock led the men to the bottom of the escarpment where a road curved toward the village of St. Davids. He then dismounted, scaled a stone wall and, waving his sword, called on his men to follow. Up the hill the British advanced as the Americans, spread out among the trees and foliage, fired away at them. At the head of the charge Isaac Brock suddenly faltered and fell over onto his left side. George Jarvis rushed to him and asked, "Are you much hurt, Sir?" But the general was incapable of replying. A single ball, fired from the weapon of an anonymous rifleman, had poked a thumb-nail sized hole beside the left lapel of his tunic, ripped through his chest and exited near his right shoulder blade. Brock placed his hand upon his breast and sank into oblivion. Befuddled, members of the 49th crowded around their fallen general until a shot from Fort Gray sliced horrendously through the belly of one of their fellows whose

lifeless corpse fell across Brock's body. Without a moment's hesitation, the infantrymen plucked the general from the ground and carried him to a house in the village where they concealed him beneath a blanket.

The momentum of the battle swung in the favour of the Americans. More boatloads of soldiers reached the Canadian shore, supported by field guns set up at their embarkation point. Major Lovett's battery at Fort Gray hurled clouds of grape shot into Queenston and silenced the gun near the grenadier guardhouse. Lovett directed his aim against the Hamilton property where the York militiamen Brock had passed enroute from Niagara huddled. A single shot snapped off the leg of Private Andrew Kennedy and shredded the calf muscles of another man.

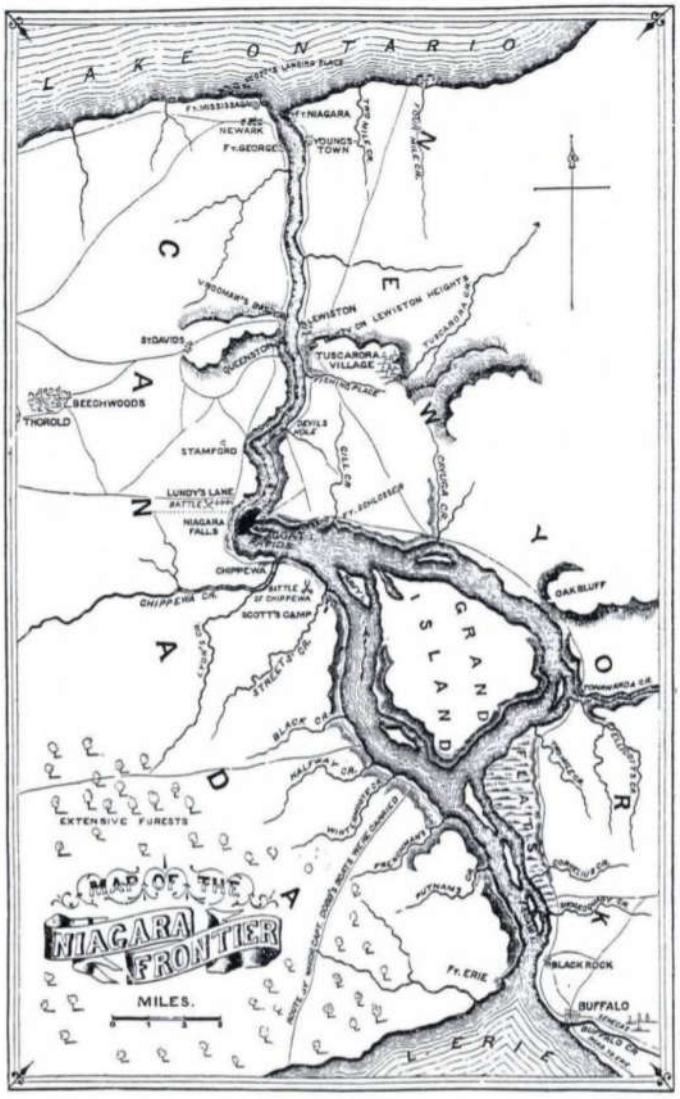
The cry went up among the British to avenge the fallen general. Captain Williams decided to assault the redan battery by a less direct route than the one Brock had taken. With about 70 men, including members of his light company and the York militia, he moved to the west of the village and climbed to the crest of the escarpment. Williams deployed his men in line down the slope of the hill. A frontal attack against the American skirmishers was soon ruled out as the foes exchanged volleys at a distance of 24 metres. On horseback, Lieutenant Colonel Macdonell joined the line at its lower end and exhorted the men to vanquish the invaders. Suddenly his horse was hit and wheeled about in pain. At the same moment a musket ball burst into his back and out his abdomen. Macdonell tumbled to the ground and then struggled to his feet. A pair of militia officers, both of whom were wounded in the process, rushed to help him off the field. Moments later John Williams, near the crest of the escarpment, received a blow to the head that nearly scalped him. He fell as if dead, but soon recovered enough to crawl to safety. At that point the word was passed to withdraw. A portion of the 49th, including Private Jarvis, was cut off by the enemy and captured. The remainder of the light company and militia retreated from the escarpment and joined Captain Dennis, who had also been wounded, with the rest of the British defence force at a position north of the village.

It was between nine and ten o'clock and a fragile calm settled over the village and the escarpment. Lieutenant Colonel Christie had managed to cross the river after having sent over regulars and militia that swelled the force on the escarpment to near 500. Wounded men, including Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer and Captain Wool, were evacuated to safety. The village was abandoned, but little time was spent in securing it. Although the British companies were not in sight, field guns had been established on the Hamilton property by Captain Holcroft and the Americans were leary about approaching it without their own artillery;

Brock's second monument, designed by Torontonian William Thomas, was completed in 1856 and was the tallest structure of its kind at the time. From "The Illustrated London News", 26 November 1859.

Christie lamented that the 18-pounder in the redan battery had been precipitously spiked by an American gunner. Soon General Wadsworth arrived, assumed command of the invasion force, and sent Christie back to Lewiston in search of ordnance. The lieutenant colonel encountered his commander-in-chief on the road about half a mile from the river. From all reports, this appears to be the closest that Major General Stephen Van Rensselaer had come to the fighting. Van Rensselaer explained to Christie that ordnance had been ordered across and that he would soon follow. Later Christie discovered that only a single 6-pounder had been ferried to the battlefield, due mainly to the inadequate size of the half-dozen boats that remained in use. The major general and a well-equipped company were preparing to embark when more fighting was heard from the direction of Queenston Heights. In reaction, the American militamen flatly refused to cross and no amount of protesting by their general and his officers could change their minds.

Christie did not hesitate to cross the river and return to the summit where he discovered that a sizeable force

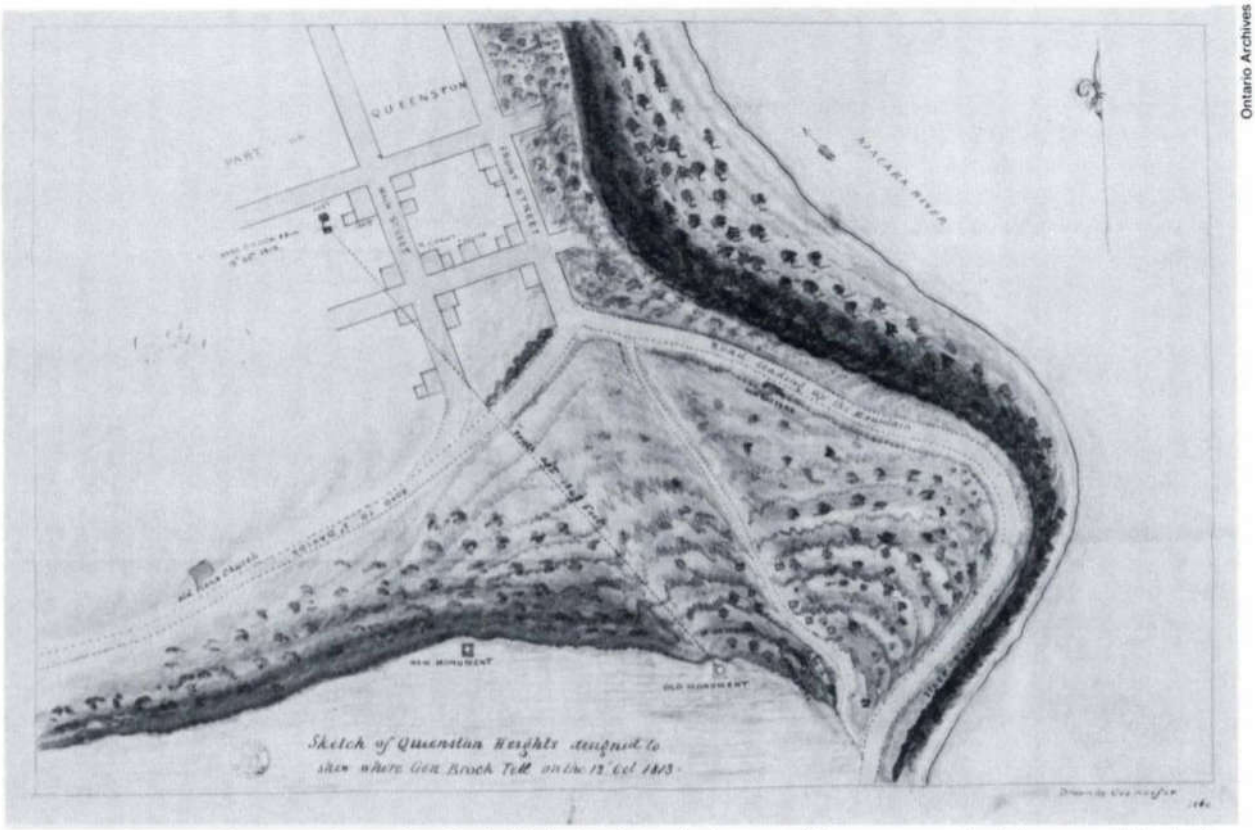


of Indians, the Mohawk warriors under Captain John Norton whom Brock had detached prior to leaving Niagara, had begun a fierce harassment to the south flank of the American position. Artillery officer Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott had led the way in repulsing the Indian attack and had begun to organize the troops for presenting an effective defence against the expected British retaliation. By this time, just after the noon hour, large detachments of British regulars could be seen marching from the direction of Fort George. The Americans were reminded that the contest was not over.

A messenger had brought news to Fort George of Brock's death and the dire situation at Queenston. Major General Roger Hale Sheaffe took to his horse and dashed off to the scene of the battle while 300 men of the 41st Regiment were assembled and marched away from the fort, leaving Thomas Evans to supervise the defence of the fort and the village with an assortment of militia and regulars. Evans' first dilemma was to attend to the fires that had suddenly erupted in numerous private and public buildings. Gathering men to form bucket brigades, he ordered others to commence a bombardment of the American positions, which had been throwing heated shot across the river. Although unequipped with a furnace for heating their own shot, the British were soon able to silence the enemy. Evans sent a portion of his force on to Queenston, and had set out on that course himself, when the American batteries renewed their bombardment. Frustrated, Evans returned to the fort to see the extent of the new attack. It was fortuitous that he did, for a red hot shot had pierced the tin roof of the stone magazine, in which were stored 800 barrels of powder. The ball had lodged in the upper beams and soon had them smouldering perilously. Evans rushed to the scene and found Captain Vigoreux of the Royal Engineers astride the roof peak assisting his men in peeling back the tin sheets and dousing the beams with buckets of water. The British guns were soon back in action and succeeded once more in silencing the American batteries.

At about 2:00, from the American position atop the Queenston Heights, Sheaffe's brigade could be seen to diverge from the line of a frontal assault and to march west to a point two kilometres or so down the escarpment. Stephen Van Rensselaer, who had joined his troops, conferred with Wadsworth, Christie, Scott and the other officers. It was decided that he would return to Lewiston and send over the companies who had been reluctant to join their brothers-in-arms. At a time when their numbers should have been increasing, the exact opposite was happening. Every boat that reached the Queenston shore was quickly filled with men, wounded and fit, frantic to flee back to safety. The Indian attack and the promise of a hotter contest to come had drained away the fighting spirit from the Americans. Van Rensselaer reached his camp and rode through the disorderly companies begging them to cross. Only a handful met the challenge, taking with them some ammunition for the beleaguered troops.

Major General Sheaffe had never won the affection of his troops with the success that Isaac Brock had enjoyed, but it was Sheaffe's thoughtful approach to the problem of dislodging the Americans from their toe-hold that produced victory. Shunning the rashness of a frontal assault, Sheaffe marched his troops toward St. Davids and then climbed the escarpment. He gathered into his force a portion of the militia and regulars who had fought since dawn. Once the summit was reached Sheaffe deployed his force in a line that extended through the woods towards the Chippewa Road and down the shoulder of the escarpment. The men of the 41st formed the centre of the line, supported



Ontario Archives

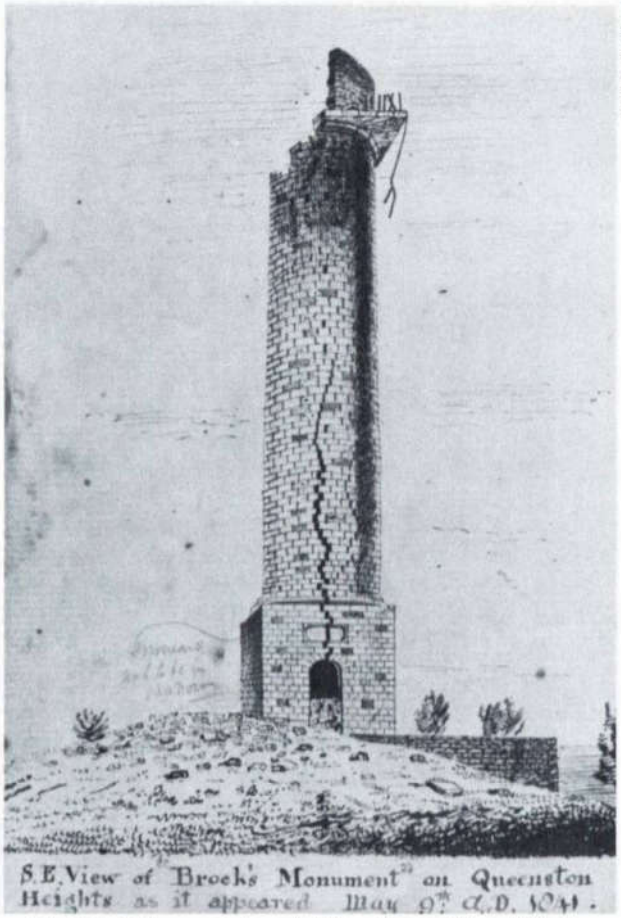
George Keefer's view of Queenston indicates where Brock fell, the site of the redan battery and the steep topography of the gorge and river bank.

by a pair of three-pounder "grasshoppers" and several companies of militia. The light company of the 49th, the Mohawks and a company of negro militiamen from Niagara held the left flank down the hill. Help was expected from the direction of Chippewa, since a recall had been sent there early on for the 150 men from the 41st and the militia companies that Captain Richard Bullock commanded. Rather than wait for Bullock's arrival, Sheaffe ordered a slow advance through the woods and onto a large field that lay in front of the American position. The time was about three o'clock.

Faced with the task of opposing a strong British counter attack William Wadsworth held a council of war with John Christie, Winfield Scott and the others. A hastily written note had just been received from their major general. Unable to coerce the hundreds of troops at Lewiston to cross, having heard nothing more from Brigadier General Smyth at Black Rock, and cognizant that a large British force had arrived at Queenston, Stephen Van Rensselaer felt that nothing remained to be done except give his subordinates permission to retreat. Somehow, Van Rensselaer stated, he would obtain enough boats to ferry the men back while he covered their crossing. Having read the note to his officers, Wadsworth asked for opinions. The Americans had not advanced far from a wooded position between the gorge and the edge of the escarpment right above the village. Their numbers were mysteriously dwindling below 300 with only a six-pounder field gun to support them. The fire from Fort Gray had ceased. It was resolved to attempt a retreat, and a portion of the force was ordered to deploy down the hill in order to cover this movement. At that moment the British advance began.

Moving steadily, but slowly toward the Americans, Sheaffe's line fired scattered volleys. On the left flank the Mohawks raised an ear-shattering war cry. Just as Sheaffe was about to order a full-ahead charge, Bullock's companies arrived on the right flank, bringing the British numbers to near nine hundred. Sheaffe's buglers sounded the charge and the final phase of the battle erupted.

The fighting was fierce and disorderly and masked by vast clouds of smoke. The Americans stumbled down the hill, attempting to effect their retreat. The Indians and redcoats were soon among them. "The mountains seemed to shake beneath the stride of death," observed Major Lovett impotently from Fort Gray. In clusters the invaders were captured, while others were slain or plunged to their deaths into the gorge. In the centre of the melee Winfield Scott realized that the game



Ontario Archives

The Ruined Monument, drawn by Major Thomas Glegg, 1840. An open doorway is said to have prevented the total demolition of the tower by allowing a portion of the blast to escape. Declared unstable, the broken structure stood for another 13 years.

was up and waved his white handkerchief in surrender. He was seized and taken to Brigadier General Sheaffe along with William Wadsworth. A cessation to the fighting was ordered, and after some time, put into effect. Sheaffe's victory was complete. Queenston and Upper Canada were saved.

The immediate results of the battle were shown in human statistics. The size of Van Rensselaer's defeat far outweighed that suffered by William Hull at Detroit. Nine hundred men, including 25 officers, became prisoners of war; a startling number of them were discovered cowering in the undergrowth lining the shore of the gorge. No accurate count of American casualties was obtained, although estimates ranged from one to five hundred. Uncounted men had died in the river while many of the wounded had returned to Lewiston. In all about sixteen hundred Americans were judged to have partaken in the attack, less than half of Van Rensselaer's army. His failure to provide the essential elements needed for a well organized invasion and the refusal of so many of his troops to cross ruined the one and only military operation of his career. Three days after the battle Stephen Van Rensselaer resigned his command to Alexander Smythe.

British losses were light in comparison to those of the Americans. Fifteen regulars and militiamen died, seventy-seven were wounded and twenty-one others were listed as missing. An uncounted number of Mohawk warriors also fell as casualties. Isaac Brock's death and that of John Macdonell, who suffered from his horrid wound until he succumbed at noon on 14 October, cast a pall over the whole affair, as Sheaffe's public notice of the battle demonstrated: "Major-General Sheaffe offers his best thanks to the troops for the bravery and good conduct so evidently displayed by all ranks and descriptions in the action of yesterday, which terminated in the complete overthrow of the enemy... This brilliant success is, however, clouded by the ever to be lamented death of Major-General Brock . . . The zeal, ability and valour with which he served his King and country render this a public loss that must be long deplored, and his memory will live in the hearts and affections of those who had an opportunity of being acquainted with his private worth." Brock's funeral, on 16 October, was attended by thousands. With precise military protocol the lengthy procession marched to the melancholy strains of the 41st Regimental Band from the government house to Fort George. Mounted on a caisson, Brock's casket, bearing a simple, silver name-plate, was accompanied by his pallbearers, among whom were Evans, Glegg, Dennis, Williams, Holcroft and Vigoreux, their left arms wrapped in crepe. Major General Sheaffe and the other official mourners followed the cortege to the grave site in the northern-most bastion in the fort where Brock and Macdonell were laid to rest, side by side.

For weeks following the battle Brigadier General Alexander Smyth fervently proclaimed his determination to succeed where Stephen Van Rensselaer had failed, but a botched invasion attempt near Fort Erie late in November terminated his ambitions and he fled the frontier. The Prince Regent bestowed a baronetcy on Roger Hale Sheaffe who succeeded Brock as commander of the British forces in Upper Canada and as head of the provincial government, but Sheaffe's term of office was short-lived. He maintained the defensive posture along the border that Governor General Prevost had long-dictated, but was soon criticized for signing a temporary armistice after the affair at Queenston and for failing to react adequately to Smyth's invasion attempts. The following April Sheaffe had the misfortune to be present when the Americans landed almost 1,700 men at York. With barely a third of that force to defend the town, Sheaffe conducted a brave defence and then retreated. In so doing he saved nearly two hundred regulars from capture, but was roundly criticized for the defeat and was soon removed to a

A view of Fort George by Edward Walsh. Construction began on Fort George in 1796 after Fort Niagara was given by treaty to the Americans. By 1812 Fort George was in a state of decay and few improvements were made in it before it was seized by the Americans in May 1813.

post near Montreal where he saw no further action in the war.

Shortly after the battle at York the Americans invaded Niagara again, this time successfully. For seven months Isaac Brock's grave lay in American hands, until Fort George was reclaimed late in 1813. In that grave he remained until 1824 when the base of a monument had been completed on the brow of the escarpment above Queenston. A second solemn procession carried the remains of the general and John Macdonell to a tomb befitting their heroic deaths, but that tomb was fated for desecration. On Good Friday 1840 the obelisk that had been raised above the grave was shattered by an explosion set by unknown persons seeking to embarrass British loyalists. Public outcry resulted in a gathering at Queenston on June 30 of that year. Thousands assembled to hear dignitaries and veterans of the battle pledge to renew the damaged monument. Thirteen years passed before those patriotic pledges produced the money needed to dismantle the tower. While the base of a new monument was prepared, the remains of Brock and Macdonell were disinterred and buried on the property of the Hamilton family in the village below.

Finally, on 13 October 1853, the fortieth anniversary of the battle of Queenston Heights, Isaac Brock and his companion were laid to rest one last time in the tomb of the monument that still stands today. Atop the limestone pillar the general's stone arm points north across the Upper Canadian landscape he defended with his death. ♦

Robert Malcomson is a writer from St. Catharines, Ontario, and co-author of "HMS Detroit: The Battle for Lake Erie."

A Winter's Tale

NO MERCY FOR MERCY HALL

Murder at Shediac Bridge

By John Edward Belliveau

Shediac Bridge is a long-settled Acadian-French community strung out along Shediac Bay and River in New Brunswick. It is within 30 minutes' commuting distance of Moncton and in summer is enlivened by cottagers and weekenders. The rural village is a neighbourhood of traditional Roman Catholic conformity where the parish church in adjacent Grande Digue is the centre of community life.

But for a few months at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was the scene of one of the most fanatical Protestant revivalist frenzies in Canadian history. In a province where early circuit-riders and self-ordained evangelists challenged the conformism of both the state Church of England and the missionary Roman Catholic Church of the region, it was both frightening and repelling.

Today, Helen Fougere runs the post office at "The Bridge" where most of the permanent residents bear the family names of the first settlers, Poiriers strongly dominating, along with Richards, Goguens, LeBlancs, Babineaus and Fougeres. The current Joseph Poirier, descended from the district's first white settler, lives across the road from the post office on the site of the little square house where, in a religious frenzy, Amasa Babcock ordered his brother Jonathan to strip naked, then drew a cross on the floor and killed his sister, Mercy Hall, with a clasp knife because "she was possessed by the devil."

The murder occurred after a full week of delerious revivalism in February of 1805 which ended only when the Englishman William Hanington, Joseph Poirier and a posse of neighbours apprehended the killer and found the battered body of Mercy Hall buried in a snowdrift. Naked as he was, brother Jonathan had fled out into the wintry night to Poirier's house where he was clothed and set out on snowshoes to seek help from the most important English resident of the area, Hanington, who had been the first English-speaking settler in the Shediac Bay region. In the absence of any magistrate or sheriff, he was called upon to settle local legal affairs.

My own 160-year-old home on Shediac Bay lies halfway between the bridge and Hanington's home, near where some of his descendants still live. There, to five generations of my family who have summered at the place, the Babcock story had always been famil-

iar because there was a tradition that the first man ever hanged in the County of Westmorland had been held in our house overnight on his way to prison. It was only recently that the complete and detailed story came into my hands when a native of the shiretown of Dorchester, where the hanging took place, showed me two tattered and yellowing bound volumes of the *New Brunswick Magazine* published through 1898 and 1899.

The paper was a monthly which sold for $1.50 per annum or 15 cents a copy and was a journal given over mainly to provincial history. It published original writings by authorities such as the historian James Hannay, the archaeologist W.F. Ganong, and Placide Gaudet, the historian and genealogist of the Acadians.

It was probably Reynolds himself, writing under the pseudonym "Rosalynde" who put together the Babcock story in the July-December 1898 issues of his magazine. With this and from my own research for a history of the Shediac Bay area it was possible at last to put together this strange winter's tale.

Almost nothing at all outside the bay community and the village of Dorchester had been known of the affair until 1884 when one J.W. Lawrence read a paper before the New Brunswick Historical Society. The Reverend W.O. Raymond, a Saint John historian of New Brunswick's English settlements, had provided him with some of the facts and the court records which verified the trial results.

William Hanington, a London fishmonger, had come to Shediac, some three miles south of The Bridge, in 1784, having purchased a grant of 5,000 acres which had been given to Captain Joseph Williams for his services in the Seven Years' War. Hanington had thought it to be adjacent to Halifax and, with a companion named Roberts, tramped nearly 200 miles through woods and scattered habitations to reach his property in New Brunswick which that year had been made a province separate from Nova Scotia. He and Roberts had crossed the Cobequid Mountains on foot hauling a hand sled containing a peck of salt and other necessities. Later, Roberts found the pioneer roughness too much and returned to England. When spring came, Hanington rode back to Halifax on horseback to get a frying pan and a few other conveniences. He could more easily have gone to Saint John, a hundred miles closer, where American Loyalists had landed a year before with substantial supplies, but apparently he had not known this.

An intrepid man, Hanington first removed six Acadian settlers from the property they believed to have been unassigned crown lands and, though they did not leave happily, Hanington lived among them in a cabin during his first winter in North America. After this, he took a canoe and paddled the 22 miles across Northumberland Strait to Prince Edward Island where there was a Scottish settlement. Crossing a field at St. Eleanor's, now the site of a Canadian Air Force base, he spied Elizabeth Derby walking behind a plow. He proposed marriage to her, was accepted and paddled her back to New Brunswick where "he installed her in his house," set up in the fur trade and lumbering, branching out into small shipbuilding and other profitable activities.

By 1800 a few other families of Wellings, Batemans and Smiths had come from England's Westmorland and Cumberland counties along with a few Loyalists to settle on lands bought from Hanington. There, at Shediac Cape, they established a Church of England congregation and soon erected the pretty little white-steepled church which continues to serve an active congregation as St. Martin's-in-the-Woods.

Among the handful of English Protestants who then settled between Grande Digue and Gilbert's Corner, where a direct descendant of Sir Humphrey Gilbert set up, was the family of Amasa Babcock and his brother Jonathan. There was no place of Protestant worship in that district and, before St. Martin's was built, Mr. Hanington on Sundays would read the Church of England service in his house for the benefit of any English-speaking people who cared to come. The service would be supplemented by the reading of one of the sermons of Bishop Wilson of Sodor and Man. On some occasions, the Babcocks, Samuel Cornwall, Simon Jenks, Amasa Killam and other adherents of the Baptist denomination would attend.

Babcock's house was three miles north of Hanington's estate, built by a man named Casey and mortgaged to a Mr. Barry in Halifax. Both Babcocks were hard-working settlers of slight education and, as Hannay has written, "of the type easily moved to go to extremes on occasions of excitement". They worked at farming and fishing, cutting wood as they needed, living humbly. In 1804 Amasa was in middle age with a wife who had borne him nine children, the eldest being 20 and the youngest in infancy. Babcock's sister, Mercy, had been married to a man named Hall, but was not then living with him but with the Babcocks. "Being of a melancholy disposition", we are told, "she was not allowed to eat with others in the family."

Hanington earlier had taken a liking to Babcock and purchased the house for him, arranging for the occupant to repay him by fishing gaspereaux (alewives) which "the squire" would sell. However, nothing of consequence had come from this so Hanington sent some young cattle to Amasa to feed and care for during the winter in lieu of the fish. By the spring of 1804, Babcock and the few Baptists in the area had begun to hold revival sessions, first on Sunday evenings and then on Thursdays as well. "Toward autumn, enthu-

This house, built for the Welling family at Shediac Cape in 1805, the year of the revivalist slaying at nearby Shediac Bridge, is identical to the one lived in by Amasa Babcock. It still stands today, after 193 years the oldest standing house at Shediac Cape or Shediac Town.

siasm became more intense and people were wrought up to a pitch of high excitement. Many believed the world was coming to an end and many varied interpretations were attached to prophecies in Old and New Testaments."

Joseph Crandall, a Baptist preacher and later member of the provincial House of Assembly who had developed Moncton's first religious congregation, had preached more moderately to the group. Two travelling evangelists had followed him and then came one Jacob Peck who was a precursor of the "Newlight" movement sweeping the region. One meeting lasted all night, "attended by the most extraordinary scenes of religious excitement". This was in January of 1805 when Peck outdid his predecessors "in the extravagance of his appeals to the excitable nature of his hearers".

"Indeed," as the Lawrence paper had it, "his lurid declamation seems to have been all that was needed to drive a number of people out of their minds." As a result of his work, Sarah Babcock, a daughter of Amasa, and Sarah Cornwall (whose family first occupied the property owned and occupied by the present writer) "fell into a species of trance, and began to prophesy that the end of the world as at hand. The infatuated people believed that these unbalanced minds were inspired and were anxious to have the prophecies preserved."

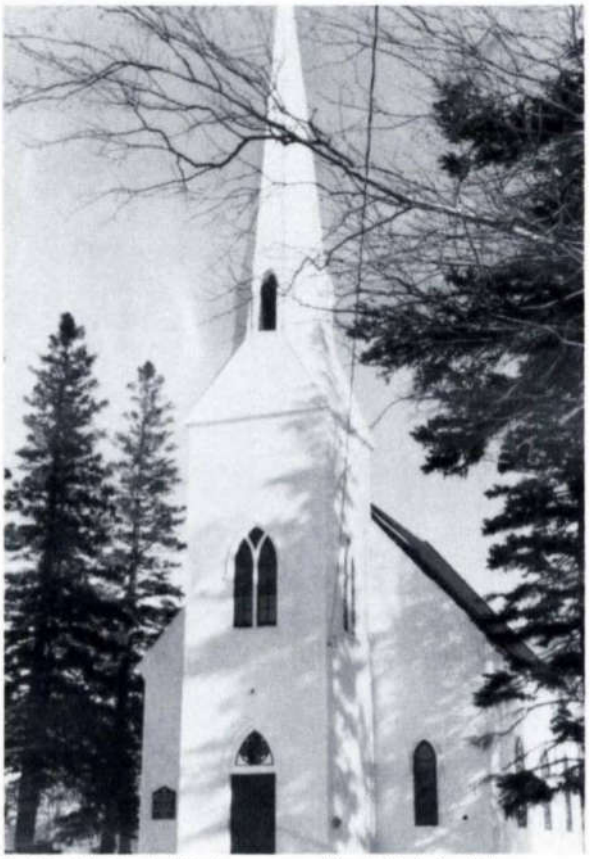
Now, there was no one present to take down the words so a message was sent to Mr. Hanington one evening, asking him to take their depositions from the people who supposed they were dying. The squire refused, saying he was not in sympathy with the methods adopted in the revival services. He then said, "it's all a delusion. They want mad-houses rather than meeting-houses." But the people were persistent and another messenger was sent after Hanington had retired for the night, saying that the girls had something to say "before they died" and wanted it written down. Then Hanington, remarking to his wife that he had better go to convince them of their error, made his way north in the middle of the night.

On arrival, he found the two girls lying on a bed while Jacob Peck walked to and fro in the room. "There," said Peck, "is my epistle." Hanington then inquired what the girls had to say and committed it to writing. "The alleged prophesy was to the purport that Mr. Hanington was to be converted, and that Jacob Peck and the girls were to convert the French settlers."

Hanington, the chief resident of the entire district, was unable to convince the hysterical settlers and the excitement continued through January and into February when the revival services were kept up day and night for a week. By this time Amasa Babcock and his family appear to have been wholly out of their minds "and utterly indifferent to their temporal affairs". Joseph Poirier took word to Mr. Hanington that the cattle put into Babcock's charge were suffering for want of food. When the owner went to question Babcock, the latter replied that "the Lord will provide." Threatening to remove the cattle if Babcock did not attend to their needs, Hanington went away on 13 February.

That night when Amasa Babcock went home, he took his brother Jonathan out to grind some grain in a hand mill, and as the flour came out of the mill, Amasa sprinkled it on the floor saying "This is the bread of Heaven." Then, according to a statement given by his wife later, Amasa had stripped off his shoes and socks, and, though the night was bitterly cold, went out into the snow crying "The world is to end! The world is to end! The stars are falling!" After shouting like this for a time he went into the house. As Hannay reports:

> The man had gone stark mad, and the others must have been out of their minds for the time being, as they assented to everything he did without appearing to think it at all strange. Then followed a most extraordinary scene. Amasa Babcock, his eyes flashing with the frenzy of insanity, arranged his family in order on a long bench against the wall, the eldest girl being at one end near the fire and the youngest child at the other end. He then took a clasp knife and began to sharpen it on a whetstone. Going over to his sister Mercy, he commanded her to remove her dress, go on her knees and prepare for death as her hour had come. She obeyed without hesitation.
>
> He next ordered his brother Jonathan to take off his clothes and the infatuated man did so. Nothing appeared surprising to that strange household of deluded beings. Amasa now acted as one possessed of a devil. He went to the window several times and looked out as if expecting something to happen. Then he laid his knife down on the floor on top of the whetstone, calling out that it was the cross of Christ. Then he picked up the knife, went to where his sister was still kneeling and stabbed her with savage strength. She fell to to the floor, the blood gushing from the wound, and died in a few moments.
>
> This fearful act seems to have brought the family to their senses. As soon as Jonathan saw the blood flow, he rushed out the door and fled naked as he was in the darkness of that winter night to the house of Joseph Poirier, a quarter of a mile distant. There he was supplied with clothing and went to Mr. Hanington's house, where he aroused the inmates by crying and shouting that his brother Amasa had stabbed his sister.

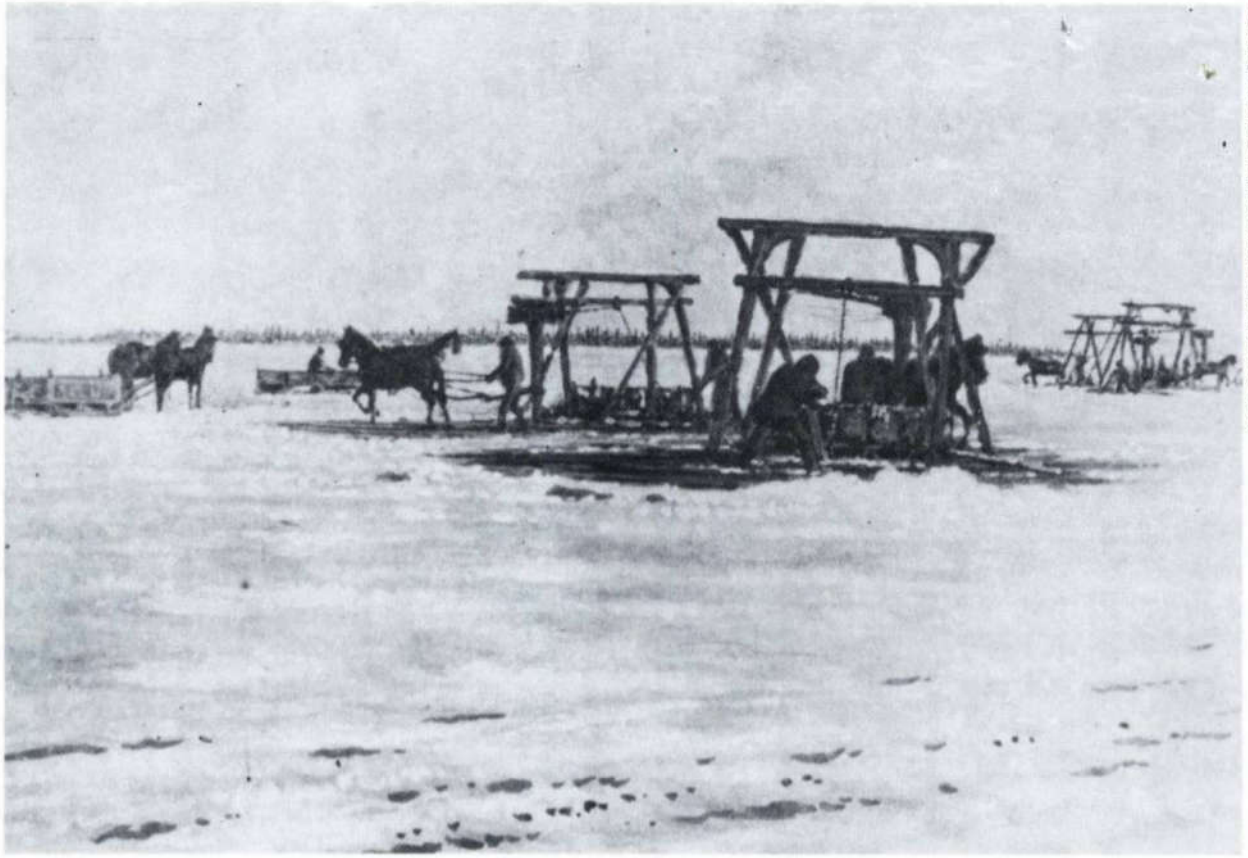


St. Martin's -in -the-Woods was erected by the little English congregation gathered by William Hanington with whom the Babcocks and other non-conformist families sometimes worshipped. The present structure was built in 1823. William Hanington is buried in the churchyard.

At that time there was no magistrate in Shediac and at first Mr. Hanington refused to go to arrest Babcock, but, on second thought, decided to act in the matter:

> Putting on snow-shoes, he started for the house of Joseph Poirier, senior, but in his excitement he found himself at the home of young Joseph Poirier, there being no public roads to follow in that part of the country in those days. He was after Pascal and Chrysostom Poirier, whose assistance he might require in making the arrest, and when he eventually found them at the elder Poirier's house they consented to go with him. It was then two o'clock in the morning.

When the informal posse entered the Babcock house they found Amasa pacing about with clasped hands and Hanington instructed the Poiriers to seize him. Babcock resisted, asking the men what they were going to do. They said they intended to take him prisoner



Metro Toronto Public Library/John Ross Robertson Collection

Hoisting oysters was an important wintertime activity for Amasa Babcock and his neighbours with the aid of winches and hoisting frames, as depicted in this watercolour by William Hind.

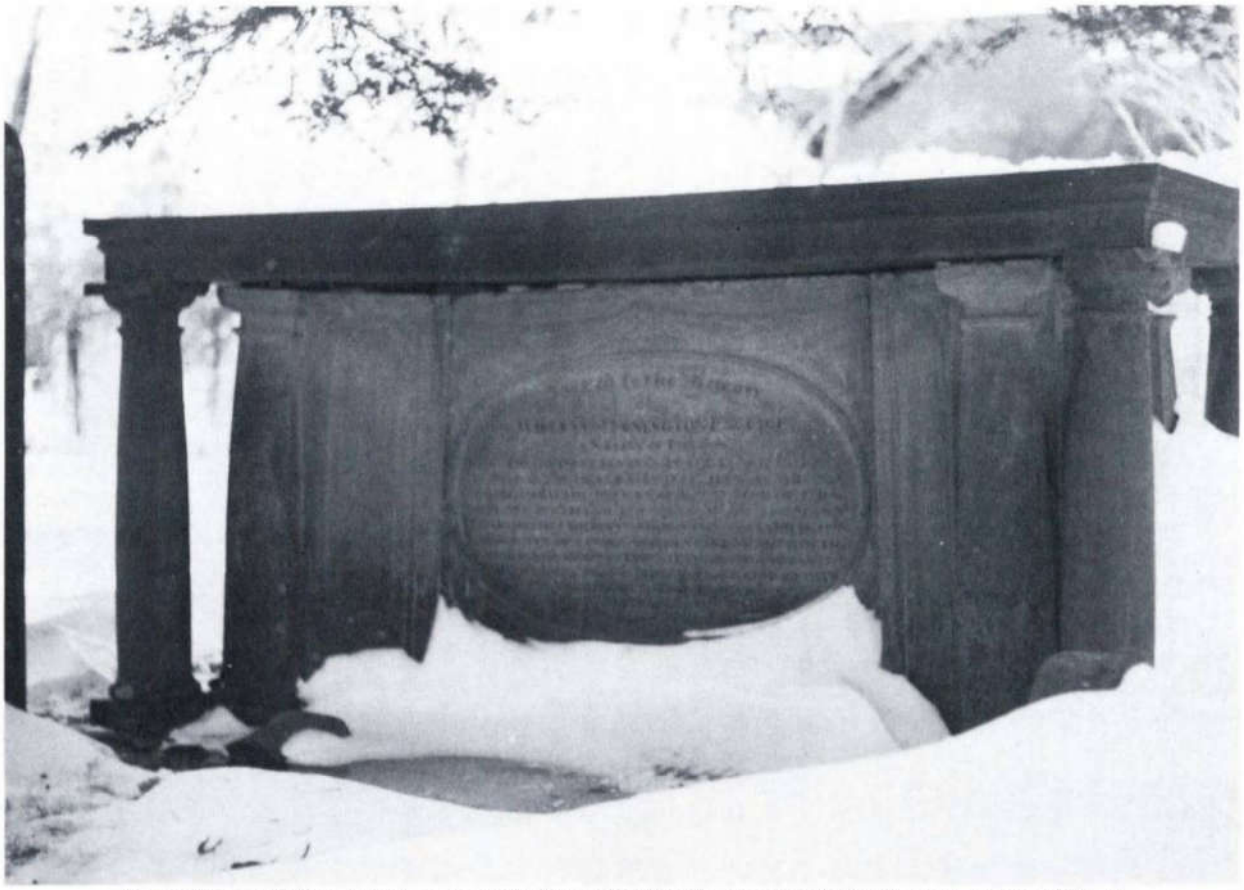
whereupon he cried out: "Gideon's men arise!" And they arose, in the form of Babcock's two sons, Caleb and Henry, who moved to assist him but were quickly restrained, compelled to sit down while the prisoner was tightly secured.

Mercy Hall's body was not then in the house nor did the apprehenders then know where it had been taken. When Mrs. Babcock was asked whether her sister-in-law was dead she said simply "yes". At sunrise when some of the English-speaking neighbours arrived, they began a search for the body and found it in a snowdrift. Amasa had disembowelled it, then buried it in the snow and walked backward to the house sweeping the snow from side to side with a broom as he went in order to cover his tracks.

With his arms securely strapped, the prisoner was taken to Hanington's house where he kept saying "Aha! Aha! Aha! It was permitted! It was permitted!" While the historical record of the event had Babcock taken first to Hanington's place, one of the ancients of the area, George Wilbur, once a tanner, told the present writer that Sheriff Beale had been summoned and kept the prisoner shackled to the brick hearth in front of the fireplace in the house which was owned by Samuel Cornwall, father of the girl in the revival seances, and now occupied by this writer whose father bought it as a summer residence 80 years ago. As a child, I remember seeing the iron shackles which were cemented into the hearth before a huge stone fireplace. However, it could not have been Babcock who was held there because the present house was built only in 1830.

County registry records show that there had been a smaller house on the site before 1806 and it may have been there that a night was spent. There was no sheriff in the area at the time of the slaying but Beale did occupy the house before my father bought it and it is likely that local lore had simply assumed in after years that, since a sheriff lived there, that was the place the prisoner would have been held on a stormy winter night.

In any event, after Amasa Babcock had made his statement, "It was permitted, it was permitted," a statement made by Jonathan Babcock was taken down in writing and necessary papers were prepared to authorize his brother's commitment to prison. When Amasa saw the papers he shouted: "These are letters to Damascus. Send them to Damascus." Clearly, his captors said afterward, he was thinking of Saul's persecution of the Christians. After this, Amasa was taken



The tombstone of William Hanington, the principal English settler, who came through the snow to arrest Amasa Babcock after the murder of Mercy Hall.

to the house of Amasa Killam who had been one of those prominent in the revival. There the prisoner became more violent, his insanity becoming patent and he was thrown onto a bed and restrained with his arms pinioned and fastened to the floor.

By this time the weather had become stormy so that travelling was out of the question and it was the third day before it abated and several men of the district prepared to transport Babcock to the county jail in Dorchester, the Westmorland county seat some 25 miles distant. They put straps about his arms, placed him on a light one-horse sled and wearing snowshoes hauled him away by hand through the woods.

News travelled very slowly in the New Brunswick of 1805 and the Saint John newspapers carried no news of the strange event until after the trial had been held four months later. This item then appeared in the *St. John Gazette* on 24 June 1805:

> On Saturday the 15th inst., at a court of Oyer and Terminer and Gaol delivery holden at Dorchester, for the County of Westmorland, at which His Honour Judge Upham presided, came on the trial of *Amos Babcock* for the murder of his sister, *Mercy Hall*, at Chediac in that county on the 13th day of February last. The trial lasted about six hours, when the jury after retiring half an hour, returned with a verdict of *guilty* against the prisoner. He was thereupon sentenced for execution on Friday the 28th instant.
>
> It appeared in evidence that for some time before the trial, the prisoner with several neighbours had been in the habit of meeting under a pretence of religious exercises at each others houses, at which one *Jacob Peck* was a principal performer; that they were under strong delusions and conducted themselves in a very frantic, irregular and even impious manner, and that in consequence of some pretended prophecies by some of the company in some of their pretended phrenzies against the unfortunate deceased; the prisoner was probably induced to commit the horrid, barbarous and cruel murder of which he was convicted. The concourse of the people at the trial was very great, who all appeared to be satisfied of the justice of the verdict and sentence.
>
> The above named *Jacob Peck* was on the same day indicted for blasphemy, profane and seditious language at the meetings above mentioned, and rec-

ognized with good securities to appear at the next Court of Oyer and Terminer in that County, to prosecute his traverse to the said indictment with effect.

It is hoped and expected that these legal proceedings will have a good effect in putting an end to the strange and lamentable delusion which made them necessary, and brought the unhappy culprit to such an ignominious death.

At the Babcock trial, one Ward Chipman, solicitor general for the province, appeared for the Crown and while his brief was believed to exist as late as 1899, it was never turned up by the historians. The prisoner was undefended. To quote the *New Brunswick Magazine*:

> The unfortunate lunatic was hanged on the date appointed and his body was buried under the gallows on what are still the premises at Dorchester. There is nothing available to show what became of Jacob Peck.
>
> That a crazy man should be arraigned, tried and condemned without counsel for his defence seems incredible in the light of modern jurisprudence, as does the fact he was hanged for a crime for which he was not morally responsible, but in these days such a man would be sent to an asylum for the insane, but in those times not only were such institutions unknown in this part of the world but there was a wholly different spirit in the administration of criminal law. In the case of Babcock there was the undoubted fact that a person had been slain without provocation, and the court took the most simple method of dealing with the slayer which was to hang him.

Author's note: In the same jail yard, 131 years after this first judicial hanging in Westmorland, I was in Dorchester for the last hanging ever held. As a young reporter for the *Moncton Transcript*, I had followed the trials of Daniel and Arthur Bannister, seventeen and nineteen years of age.

They were perhaps no more responsible morally for the crime they died for than was the deluded Amasa Babcock. They had been found guilty of the murder of one Philip Lake, his wife Bertha and their infant daughter when the Lake cabin, a dozen miles from Moncton at Pacific Junction, had been burned. Another infant had been kidnapped and was later found in the Bannister home a few miles away. Mae Bannister, the youths' mother, had sent them to get the younger baby with which she could blackmail a self-acclaimed evangelist who visited the place to "give the children Sunday school lessons." Her intention was to charge the occasional evangelist with fathering the child by her teenage daughter Frances and thereby extract money from him.

Daniel and Arthur were a semi-moronic pair of dupes and assumed that the Lakes living common-law in a settler's bush hut would be pleased to have an extra baby taken off their hands. Within the cabin, a scuffle had ensued, a lantern was knocked from a table and the shanty set afire. Lake was shot with a .22 guage rifle but Bertha and another infant had fled into the deep snow where she was struck on the head and died. The baby froze to death in the six-below-zero Fahrenheit weather on the night of 6 February 1936.

Tried by an aged and almost wholly deaf judge of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick, the youths were defended by Murray Lambert, a Moncton lawyer who had practised little or no criminal law. When executed by "Hangman Ellis" they dropped from the gallows in the same jail yard as Babcock. They were cut down by Constable Joseph Fenwick of the RCMP, who told me afterward that he had been assigned to sit with them the night before. After a Salvation Army chaplain had led them in prayer, Fenwick tried to make conversation and asked what would happen at the big hockey game the next evening.

"Ain't nothin' to us," they replied after some nudging. "We ain't goin' to be there." ♦

John Edward (Ned) Belliveau is a former national affairs journalist and political public relations executive. Since returning to his native New Brunswick after 30 years in Ontario, he has published half a dozen books on regional history and political affairs, including a history of the Shediac Bay community and the City of Moncton. He and his wife live in the 160-year-old house at Shediac Cape, on the site of an earlier house where the devil-possessed Amasa Babcock is believed to have been held overnight during a furious winter storm on the way to the place where he was hanged.

Oyer and Terminer

"Oyer and Terminer" is an Anglo-French expression meaning "to hear and determine". This was the commission given to the travelling justice or justices of the assize court that tried Amasa Babcock for murder. Judges with commissions of oyer and terminer were empowered to deal with treasons, murders, felonies etc.

In a modern court Babcock might have been found not guilty because of insanity, although a Crown Prosecutor would undoubtedly point out that the accused took pains to conceal the crime by hiding the body and covering his tracks in the snow, suggesting that he knew he had done something wrong.

AN INDIAN'S DEATH IN EXILE

The Tragedy of White Bird

By Hugh A. Dempsey

The story of Chief Joseph and the epic flight of the Nez Perce from the Wallowa valley of Idaho in 1877 is one of the most dramatic tales of American Western history. Battling the United States Army, Joseph led his people along a tortuous route over the mountains and across Montana, surrendering a short distance south of the Canadian border.

The Nez Perce had the reputation of being one of the most peaceful tribes in the Northwest. They had been friendly to fur traders, welcomed missionaries, and in 1855 agreed to the terms which provided them with a reservation. However, when gold was discovered on their lands, the reservation was cut down and the Nez Perce learned that they had lost the Wallowa Valley, one of their most important camping places. A number of chiefs would not acknowledge the new boundaries and refused to move from their favourite territory.

In the 1870s, settlers and ranchers began encroaching upon the Wallowa and Indian complaints went unheeded. Instead, the army ordered the Indians onto their assigned reservation to join the Christian Nez Perce already settled there. During the roundup, some of the young hotheads revolted and killed a number of miners and settlers. The army responded by attacking an Indian camp on White Bird Creek but were soundly defeated.

Then, after a number of minor skirmishes, the Nez Perce decided to seek refuge with the Crow Indians in Montana. If they were not welcome there, they would go to Sitting Bull's camp in Canada.

There were three main leaders in the Nez Perce camp — Chief Joseph, White Bird, and Looking Glass — and altogether some 200 men, 550 women and children set out with 2,000 horses for their sanctuary. It was an epic two-month journey which has been praised by military historians as one of the most brilliantly executed feats in the history of warfare. The tactics and strategies used by the Nez Perce in outwitting several army commands brought admiration from the entire country.

The Indians went over the Lolo Pass into Montana, and down to Yellowstone Park. When they found no shelter among the Crows, they headed north for Canada, passing through the Judith Basin, and finally resting at the Bear's Paw Mountains. For a while they thought they were safe, having left General Oliver O. Howard's troops far behind, but they did not know that Colonel Nelson A. Miles was advancing from the east. Before they could travel the final forty miles into Canada, they were completely surrounded and besieged.

The Nez Perce held out for over a week, hoping that Sitting Bull might come to their rescue, but when he failed to appear, Chief Joseph negotiated a surrender. He met with Colonel Miles and later with General Howard, and agreed to give up after he received assurances that the Nez Perce could winter on the Tongue River and be allowed to go back to their reservation in the spring. Instead, the prisoners — 87 men, 184 women, and 147 children — were shipped to a prisoner of war camp at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, "a miserable and unhealthy location between the Missouri River and a swampy bottomland."

But there were some Nez Perce who would not surrender on that bleak day in the autumn of 1877. They were led by White Bird who, with several dozen warriors and with women and children — including Joseph's teenaged daughter — slipped away on the night before the surrender to become exiles in Canada.

White Bird, or *Peopeo Kiskio Hihih*, was undoubtedly the most prominent Nez Perce chief to make the trek. His band had been second in size to Joseph's and he was one of the leading medicine men of the tribe. By 1877, White Bird was in his sixties. "Standing just short of six feet," noted one historian, "well proportioned, with a splendid physique and stately bearing, he commanded attention wherever seen. A medicine man, and boasting a long line of noted warrior ancestry, his status and influence with his following was pronounced. As a buffalo hunter and experienced in tribal warfare, he held an honoured place in all councils. He was mild in temper and in speech. . . "

Before Joseph capitulated, White Bird's followers and a number of other small parties slipped away from the main camp and headed north from the Bear's Paw

Glenbow Archives

Nez Perce Indians on their Idaho reservation, 1906, photographed by E.S. Curtis.

Mountains. Some were on foot and none of them knew how they would be received by the Sioux or other onetime enemy tribes. In fact, at least seven men, including White Bird's stepson, were killed by Assiniboines while on their way north. Of all the escaping groups, White Bird's was the largest, consisting of 103 men, 60 women, 8 children, and about 200 head of horses.

The Sioux welcomed their fellow refugees, noting that there were "wounded men and children, some badly, some through the body, arms and legs." They took the Indians into their lodges and kept them there for the winter. By the spring of 1878, most of the Nez Perce had made their own tepees and formed a separate camp, although they still stayed with the Sioux.

As the warm weather returned, a number of Nez Perce began to think of going back to Idaho. Joseph and those who had surrendered were still suffering under terrible conditions in the prisoner of war camp at Fort Leavenworth but some of the Canadian refugees thought they would be safe if they could reach their Christian relatives on the Lapwai reservation.

The first Indians slipped away in June, the largest group consisting of twenty persons, including Joseph's daughter. During their trek across Montana, these refugee parties survived by killing cattle, and stealing food and horses from white settlers. When they were discovered, a fight usually followed and at least seven white settlers were killed in the clashes. Soon, army patrols were pursuing them and further skirmishing occurred. In the end, several of the parties were apprehended while the remainder scattered, with only a handful coming back to Canada. Those who were captured were sent to join the others in confinement in Kansas.

White Bird tried to stop the exodus, realizing that the attempts to return home were ending in bloodshed. He complained:

> Some of my Indians are deserting me. They do so when I am sound asleep in my bed; they run off at night and if those men commit depredations I am not to blame. I don't want to fight any more.

But other small parties kept leaving the camps and making their way towards Idaho, some travelling across the Canadian plains to live with the Kootenay Indians while others continued south-west to the Spokan tribe. In the summer of 1878, a band of about ten persons, led by Eagle of the Light's brother, was camped with the Kootenays on the Canadian side of the Tobacco Plains, waiting for a chance to return home.

A prominent Montanan, Duncan McDonald, visited White Bird in Canada that summer to discover his plans. ". . . we learned that White Bird was with Crazy Horse's band of about 300 lodges at a place called Sandy Hills," reported McDonald. The visitor travelled with the refugees to Fort Walsh a short time later when they went to a meeting with a United States army delegation led by Lieutenant G.W. Baird. Under the watchful eye of the North West Mounted Police, the two groups discussed the situation and the army learned that the treatment of Chief Joseph had convinced the Nez Perce to stay in Canada. As White Bird commented:

> Now I came over here [to Canada] as to an asylum, and am waiting Joseph's return to Idaho. He was promised by General Miles that if he surrendered he would be taken back there. . . . I am, with my warriors, awaiting news from Joseph. If the Gov-

ernment sends him back to his home in Idaho I will at once go back and make peace. . . I want justice from the Americans, and if I cannot get it I am going to remain in the North and do the best I can.

During the late summer of 1878, the rumour was circulated that the entire Nez Perce camp intended crossing Blackfoot country to reach the mountains. Fearing trouble, the North West Mounted Police moved a troop of men to Fort Walsh and held another in readiness at Fort Macleod to prevent any clash between the two enemy tribes. However, White Bird and his followers decided to stay where they were, as long as they had enough to eat. Instead of going to the Rockies, they moved farther east, onto the plains near Wood Mountain. Each month, a few more Nez Perce abandoned the camp, some to go north to trap and others to find work. By the spring of 1879, White Bird's camp was reduced to about ten lodges.

During this period, the Nez Perce tried to stay near Wood Mountain with the Sioux and live off the dwindling supply of buffalo. By 1879, however, the main herds had been destroyed on the Canadian side so the refugees were forced to hunt in Montana and to flee back across the border at the first sign of any army patrol. During the summer, at least one skirmish took place between Colonel Miles's cavalry and a mixed hunting party of Sioux and Nez Perce. The two Nez Perce said to have been involved were White Eye and Johnson. By this time, it was evident that the "hostiles" were in a dangerous situation. The few remaining buffalo herds were being pushed farther and farther south across the Missouri River where they were beyond the reach of the hunters. The Canadian government, while offering sanctuary, insisted that the Sioux and the Nez Perce were United States Indians and refused to provide rations or to allot them reservations.

By 1880, with all hope of subsistence gone, many of the Sioux began surrendering to American authorities. White Bird, unable to stay in the Wood Mountain area without food, and unwilling to be shipped off to Fort Leavenworth, finally decided to move closer to the Rocky Mountains. In January, a Mounted Policeman reported that a few lodges of Nez Perce had arrived at Fort Macleod. By this time, the presence of the Nez Perce had been accepted by the Blackfoot tribes and no concern was expressed when the ragged party camped near the Mounted Police detachment at Pincher Creek.

In the spring, White Bird selected a village site on the banks of Pincher Creek near a stone quarry, between the Peigan Indian Reserve and the Mounted Police. It was a beautiful location in the rolling foothills, and only a few miles from the mountains. Deer and other game could be found to the west, while nearby ranchers offered the opportunity for employment.

Glenbow Archives

Chief Joseph, the famous Nez Perce leader and friend of White Bird.

The Nez Perce built cabins of poplar logs they cut in the valley. Later, more sturdy pine logs were floated down from the mountains. Once they were established, the Indians had to eke out a living any way possible. For example, two Nez Perce identified only as Dexter and Dick, worked for a freighter in the Fort Macleod area in 1880. A pioneer of Pincher Creek recalled seeing two sisters, Sarah and Kate, earning money in the village of Pincher Creek. "Sarah was a handsome woman," she said. "She used to ride around on horseback selling berries. Once she came with a 2½ quart pail of berries for which she asked 25 cents. Mrs. Duthie said she had got a 5 quart pail for 25 cents. Sarah looked at her calmly, then said. 'You lie.' As it turned out she was right; Mrs. Duthie had made a mistake. Sarah and Kate had both taken part in an Indian massacre and got a gunshot wound and slash with a knife."

Another settler, G.W. Morden, commented that the Nez Perce "had to rustle their own living and came to us with blueberries, gooseberries, fish, and sometimes venison or mountain sheep meat, which they were glad to 'swap' for tea, sugar and flour, etc."

Mounted Policemen from the Pincher Creek detachment investigated the killing of White Bird. Above are members of the detachment in 1895.

Morden considered the Nez Perce to be "the finest type of Indians I have ever seen, lithe, keen fellows six feet and over in height with aquiline noses and strong features. They were splendid hunters and perfect horsemen."

These Indians were afraid of Americans, and when the Mordens arrived, they were asked, "You Boston Man? You King George Man?" When assured that the new settlers were "King George's Men," they were pleased and became quite friendly.

Any estimate of the number of Nez Perce who stayed in White Bird's camp is difficult to determine because they were not Canadian Indians. There were probably no more than five or six families. No records were kept of them and the only times their names appeared in local newspapers was when they were involved in crimes or other newsworthy activities. But they were generally a law-abiding people so these events were rare. And when they did happen, the newspapers referred to the Indians only by their Christian names. Besides the notice of Dexter and Dick in 1880, there was a mention of Nez Perce Charlie, who died in 1888 and Nez Perce Billy, who died in the 1890s.

Even when Chief Joseph and his people were returned to Idaho in 1885, most of White Bird's followers made no attempt to join them. Certainly White Bird had no reason to expect that he would receive a friendly welcome there and, as he was now in his late seventies, he apparently preferred to live out his final years peacefully in exile.

Yet it was not to be, for in 1892, White Bird was the victim of a tragedy which created a sensation all across Canada. Also involved was a twenty-six-year-old Nez Perce named Charlie Ilamnieenimhoosoos, or *Hasenahmahkikt*. To local white people he was simply Nez Perce Sam. He was described as 5 foot 9¾ inches tall, married, and was born "west of the Rocky Mountains on U.S.A. side." In the spring of 1892, these two men became involved in a dispute which resulted in the murder of the aged refugee chief.

The underlying reason for the killing was a fear that White Bird was using supernatural powers to destroy Sam's family. White Bird was a leading ceremonialist and medicine man, and was often called upon to treat the sick. According to one story, Nez Perce Sam's son began to suffer from periodic convulsions and the father became convinced that White Bird was using "bad medicine" on him. In another version, two of Sam's children had died because of the powers of White Bird, while other accounts say that the lives of the two boys were being threatened by the medicine man. Whatever the true reason, the young man was convinced that his family was in danger from the supernatural powers exerted by White Bird.

Sam later explained in court that "He [White Bird] and I were always friends and I used to share everything I got at the stores with him. Four years ago he diseased one of my boys and he has diseased others in the camp."

James F. Macleod, the former commissioner of the NWMP, was the presiding magistrate. He commented that "the interpreter was quite at a loss to explain what he meant. At last I made out that Sam was accusing White Bird of having had an evil influence over his son and the others. That in fact he was 'Bad Medicine' to them. What amongst the Crees I think is called a 'Windigo.' "

Although the Western press denied that any deaths had actually occurred prior to the illness of Sam's son, the stories persisted. For example, a Peigan Indian claimed that the trouble started when one of Sam's children came into White Bird's cabin and disturbed him by running around and making a noise. The old man pointed his pipe at the child and the boy dropped dead. A Nez Perce version is that Sam's son became very ill and just before he died he claimed that he was White Bird. Later, when a second son made the same statement before he died, Sam was convinced that White Bird was using evil powers on his family.

Because the Nez Perce were not on any census lists, no records were kept of their births and deaths so there was no way of telling who had lived or died in the Nez Perce Sam family. For example, not until several years later was reference made to the fact that in 1892, Nez Perce Sam also had three daughters, aged eight, three, and one years of age.

The details of the murder of White Bird, however, are recorded in the court testimony. According to the evidence, early in the evening of 6 March 1892, White Bird left his cabin and went down to the river. Some time later, the chief's two wives, Kate and *Wyanatotampip*, heard a noise "like a person afraid, suffering." Kate went to the door and said she saw Sam with an axe under his arm walking quickly with his two boys. Upon reaching his house, Sam reportedly gave the axe to one of his boys to hide and then burned his bloodstained clothes in an outside bonfire.

Next morning, a Nez Perce named Billy found White Bird's body. He testified:

> I was going after horses early in the morning and found his body near the trail. . . . the body was laying on its side and chopped all up. It was right beyond White Bird's house about 70 feet off. It was laying in a hollow there. The ground was soft. . . [I] saw tracks from there to [the] trail going down [the] Creek, towards Sam's house. [I] thought it [was] made by a man's track, moccasin.

Billy immediately contacted the North West Mounted Police in Pincher Creek and Sergeant James Davis went to the scene. He found the body and followed the tracks to within a few yards of Nez Perce Sam's cabin. He then went to the suspect's house and placed him under arrest. "He asked me what man was killed," testified Sergeant Davis. "I told him I suspected him of doing it, that he would have to come to Barracks with me. He refused to go. I told him he would have to come; I would take him. . . I had my hand on the butt of my revolver."

After the arrest, Sergeant Davis and a coroner's jury searched the area and found the axe hidden in a woodpile. It was covered with blood and dirt. Davis also determined that a pair of Sam's moccasins fitted perfectly the footprints in the soil and then found scraps of clothing in the remains of the bonfire.

With this evidence in hand, Sam and his wife were charged with murder and two-and-a-half months later a jury of local ranchers and businessmen was sworn in. The long delay was caused by the difficulty in finding a Nez Perce interpreter. Both suspects pleaded not guilty. C.F.P. Conybeare of Fort Macleod appeared for the Crown, but neither of the accused was represented by counsel.

At the beginning of the trial, Judge Macleod explained that the prisoners had the right to cross-examine any of the witnesses, but they made no attempt to do so. As neither could speak English, all discussions were translated by a man named Sam Pablo, who had been brought up from the United States for that purpose.

During the trial, Coroner S.M. Smith stated that White Bird had been struck in the head by an axe three times, smashing his skull. Any of the blows would have caused instant death. After hearing the evidence of White Bird's widows and others, Sam's two boys, Pete and Jack, were sworn in. Both denied any part in the crime and said they had been away fishing in the afternoon. About four hours after they got home, their mother had come in with the axe in her belt and said that she had killed White Bird. The boys claimed that their father had been home all evening.

At the conclusion of the trial, Sam addressed the jury and denied all knowledge of the murder. However, the jury quickly returned a verdict of guilty for Sam and not guilty for his wife. Sam was sentenced to be hanged in the Manitoba Penitentiary on 16 July.

Until this time, the case had aroused very little interest in the community. No one associated the Pincher Creek killing with the exploits of one of three American Indian heroes who had thwarted the United States army at White Bird Creek and had played a major role in the Nez Perce flight for freedom. To the press, White Bird was simply "a feeble old man". The *Macleod Gazette* had summarized the murder by saying, "Two Nez Perce Indians got into a dispute and one man chopped the other to pieces with an axe." The report of the trial was similarly brief.

However, the case came to the attention of the Reverend John Maclean, a Methodist missionary at Fort Macleod. An amateur ethnologist and the author of a number of books, he was interested in the supernatural

Glenbow Archives

The Rev. John Maclean, a Methodist missionary, led efforts to save the life of Nez Perce Sam in 1892.

features of the case and personally interviewed the prisoner. Convinced that Sam had committed the murder in the belief he was protecting his family, Maclean launched a campaign to save the man's life. He was supported by a fellow missionary, the Reverend John McDougall, and together they appealed to their brother clergymen to help them.

Support came immediately from the Reverend Arthur William Goulding, a Winnipeg minister. He visited the prisoner in the penitentiary and became convinced that the man's motive for killing the chief had been based on native religious beliefs. The matter was brought up at the annual Methodist conference in Winnipeg and a resolution was passed asking for clemency. A petition, signed by more than 700 people from the Manitoba capital, was then forwarded to Ottawa. In the meantime, newspapers in Winnipeg and Eastern Canada began clamouring for a lighter sentence for the convicted man. They belaboured the fact that he had not been represented by counsel, with the *Manitoba Free Press* referring to the upcoming hanging as "nothing less than judicial murder".

The Alberta newspapers were aghast at the outcry. The *Macleod Gazette* was particularly outspoken in its condemnation of the Eastern Press.

> We cannot help thinking that there is a good deal of maudlin sentimentality flying about in the case of Nez Perce Sam. The murder, so far as we can discover, was a brutal one in the extreme, and entirely unprovoked. The jury was made up of men who live on the spot and who were the best judges of what Sam deserved. . . .

The newspaper went on to chastize the two missionaries for launching the appeal, claiming that they were supposed to be "working to convert these savages from the ways that are dark." The comment continued:

> We can see no reason why this Indian should not suffer the consequences of his crime. It will be a pretty state of affairs if Indians get it into their heads that they can slaughter people promiscuously, and that to escape they need only plead witchcraft or some other old woman's excuse.

But the clamour continued, and further evidence of Sam's good character was provided when he was baptized in a Methodist service at the penitentiary, taking the name of Arthur William Goulding, after his much admired spiritual adviser.

Responding to numerous petitions and letters to the national capital, the Minister of Justice finally commuted Sam's sentence to life imprisonment several days before the planned execution. Missionaries and Winnipeggers congratulated themselves for having saved the man from the gallows but the postponement of the man's death proved to be only temporary. In the 1890s, penitentiaries were death traps for many Indians. Accustomed to open air, they were subject to sickness and depression when held in confinement for any length of time. For Nez Perce Sam, the commutation of sentence was merely a delay; a year later, on 1 October 1893, he died in prison, reportedly having starved himself to a point where he was susceptible to any passing disease.

Meanwhile, the sensational murder of White Bird had completely disrupted the lives of the few remaining Nez Perce at Pincher Creek. The camp split, with a couple of families who opposed the murder moving downstream to a river bottom on the Peigan Reserve. The rest stayed near the quarry, then gradually died off or drifted away, some going back to Idaho.

An attempt was made to put Nez Perce Sam's two boys into a nearby Indian school, but they both proved to be troublesome and ran away. The last word about them before they dropped out of sight was a sad comment in the local newspaper in 1894. "Pete Sam and Jack Sam," it stated, "two Nez Perce Indians, were charged with breaking into the house of J. Schofield, and stealing clothes, etc. They were sentenced to one month each." Nez Perce Sam's wife Sarah became a charwoman for the local church and made moccasins and handicraft items for sale. In 1898, a local storekeeper identified her as "the only remaining Nez Perce woman" in the community. When she died of tuber-

Glenbow Archives

The convicted murderer, Nez Perce Sam, was among prisoners taken from southern Alberta to Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba in 1892. Nez Perce Sam is seated front row right in this photograph taken in Winnipeg.

culosis a year later, she was fondly recalled as someone who was "well known in this entire district". Immediately after her death, her house was burned to the ground and local townspeople made arrangements to care for the woman's three daughters until they could be sent to the Lapwai reservation in Idaho.

The tragedy of White Bird's expulsion from his traditional Wallowa hunting grounds and his exile in Canada seems heightened by the circumstances of his death. Killed by one of his own people who was only a boy during the historic trek, the great Nez Perce leader died virtually unknown in a strange land. To the Canadian public, he was simply an old medicine man who had figured in a sensational killing. They were unaware of his leadership, his unyielding attitude towards the American army, and his crucial role with Chief Joseph in the events of 1877. He was buried in an unmarked grave near Pincher Creek and when the tiny Nez Perce village was abandoned, the graveyard became part of a farmer's field. The great White Bird was alone and forgotten. ◆

Hugh A. Dempsey of Calgary is an authority on the Indians of Western North America and the author of numerous books and articles on native history.

The Seed and the Harvest

By Tom Saunders

In a time of economic recession, such as the present, it is always encouraging to hear of someone who beats the odds and makes a business success when every indicator prophesies failure. Such is the story of the Lindenberg brothers, Arwid and Bruno, sons of immigrant Latvian parents, who founded the Lindenberg Seed Company almost 60 years ago.

This company today is a flourishing business located in Brandon, Manitoba. Arwid and Bruno, later joined by their younger brother Arthur, started their business in the 1930s, in the midst of the Great Depression, when times were even worse than they are today. A large part of the population was out of work and hundreds of young men, including many university graduates, took to "riding the rods" in search of employment. There was no unemployment insurance or welfare system in those days and no medicare program or any of the other social benefits which have come with the welfare state.

Western Canada was especially hard hit. Prices of primary products were low, "relief camps" and soup kitchens were the order of the day, mortgage foreclosures and bankruptcies were prevalent, prairie farms were drought-stricken and many had to survive on food and clothing supplied by the "relief trains" from the East.

In addition, there was little opportunity for continuing education or job retraining and no government handouts or other financial inducements for anyone who aspired to start a new small business. Without adequate collateral, it was virtually impossible to arrange a loan from a bank.

It was in these circumstances that Arwid and Bruno Lindenberg graduated from high school and were confronted with the discouraging prospect of trying to find work. Their father operated a farm just north of Rapid City, Manitoba, (about 24 miles northwest of Brandon), but there seemed no possibility of his needing two more hired hands there. In this predicament they decided, with their parents' help, to try something on their own.

They started with beekeeping in a small way, and in a matter of five years had acquired six locations for more than 250 colonies of bees. Soon they were importing and re-shipping thousands of packages of bees for local distribution and throughout the prairie provinces.

Having made this success of the bee business, they decided to experiment with pedigreed seed-growing. They started with peas, went on to produce pedigreed crested wheat grass and "as an act of faith and in a vision of the future," founded their seed business, packaging and shipping garden seed on a commission basis through retail outlets, mostly in towns and villages in the rural areas. They put out their first small seed catalogues at this time. Today Lindenberg seeds are marketed through many provinces of Canada.

Bruno and Arwid had begun their operations while still living on the family farm, but in 1938 they rented rooms above the main general store in Rapid City. These rooms provided both living quarters and business premises. The brothers cooked their own meals, but sent their laundry home to be attended to by their mother, who provided them with some of their food. It was a humble beginning, but their small business prospered and, in 1941, looking for other worlds to conquer, they moved to Brandon. They opened a small retail store there, in addition to the business they already had, and seemed to be well on the road to further success.

But World War II was into its second year by this time and, as was the case with so many others, the war disrupted their plans. Bruno enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in 1942, as did his younger brother, Arthur. Arwid, who was exempted from military service on medical grounds, was left to carry on the business alone,

The original Lindenberg plant and warehouse in Brandon, Manitoba.

LINDENBERG'S **NORTHERN GROWN** SEEDS

Buy Your Garden Seeds From Your Local Merchant at Mail Order Prices

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Beets . DETROIT DARK RED. A smooth beet, flesh being dark red, tender and fine-grained. One of the best varieties for the home.

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7
STANDARD VARIETIES IN EXTRA LARGE PACKETS
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Some of our 5c pkts. contain as much as three times the amount of seed as many other 5c pkts.

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Registered Lincoln (Homesteader)
PEAS
½ lb. 20c
They will for double the price elsewhere

Peas . . . . REGISTERED LINCOLN or HOMESTEADER. This is one of the finest peas grown in Western Canada. Fine flavoured and abundant yielders. Our stocks are No. 1, grown from our prize-winners (World's Exhibition, Regina, 1908). We are sure that once you grow this variety, it will always be your favourite. Pkg. ½ lb. (just 5 sealed).

Guarantee All of our seeds are fresh, guaranteed, and high in germination. We guarantee these seeds to give satisfaction or will refund your purchase price.

Canadian Grown Seed is hardier and earlier than that imported from the south, and is often more productive. Almost all of our seeds are grown in Canada.

1935

LINDENBERG BROS.,
RAPID CITY, Man.

The firm was still located in Rapid City when the Lindenbergs issued their first seed catalogue in 1935.

The old Lindenberg farmhouse at Rapid City (left) and the first Lindenberg store in Brandon (right), from a 1941 snapshot. Below, the Lindenberg parents, Lewis and Emily, on the family farm.

with the help of his wife, Grace. But the Lindenberg brothers survived the war, and so did their business.

Indeed, both during and after the war, their business prospered. Their retail store flourished in a way they could scarcely have foreseen. When they opened it, the shopping area for most retail businesses in western Manitoba was no more than ten or twelve miles. But, with modern highways and the increasing prevalence of automobile traffic, they found customers coming to do business with them from a much larger area, in some cases from more than a hundred miles away.

They had their setbacks, of course. In 1979 their large wooden warehouse, which had been built in 1946, was destroyed by fire and its entire contents lost. But a new concrete-and-steel building was erected to replace it and business went on. Before this, however, in 1966, they had celebrated the official opening of their new head office and present retail store as a sign that the Lindenberg Seed Company was here to stay.

Strangely enough, during the generally prosperous decades following World War II, Brandon's largest seed company, McKenzie, ran into financial difficulties and eventually had to be bailed out by the provincial government. The Lindenberg brothers encountered no such problem. There were several reasons for this. First, theirs was a much smaller company and they were able to maintain a more scrupulous control of both

The Lindenberg brothers — Arwid, Arthur and Bruno — in the present store in Brandon. All the founders have retired, but the firm continues as a family concern, with sales across Canada. Below: From the Lindenberg catalogue, 1992.

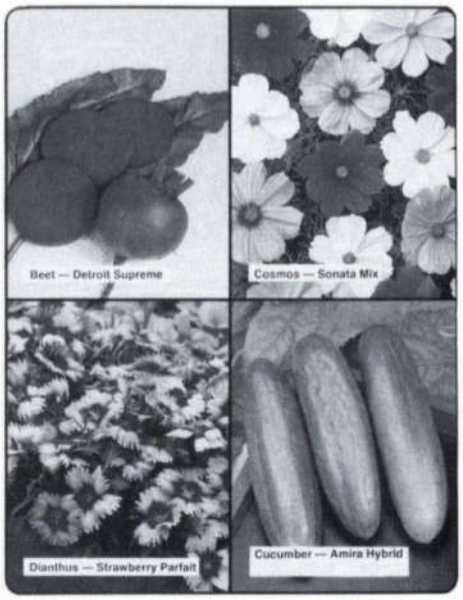
capital and operating expenses. Second, theirs was a family business, and they were careful not to take out of the business more than the company could afford. Third, and perhaps most important, having started their business in the "dirty thirties" they had learned from the beginning the value of a dollar. The word "waste" was not in their vocabulary. Every dollar had to be accounted for; and still is, even though the dollar of today is worth a lot less than the dollar of half-a-century ago. They had received no government assistance in starting their business; they have required no government bail-out since.

Today the business continues to flourish. Arwid and Bruno have retired, along with their brother Arthur, and a new generation of Lindenbergs now runs the show. But it all began in the "dirty thirties", when two young men could not find work and decided to try something on their own.

It is a heart-warming story for these times, as well as for the days of the Great Depression. And it could be an inspiration to others in the recession-ridden world of today.

Some centuries ago in England, during a period of uncertainty, turmoil and unrest, it was said of a certain gentleman that his most excellent characteristic was that "he did the best things in the worst times, and hoped them in the most calamitous". That could well be used as a permanent tribute to Arwid and Bruno Lindenberg and their brother Arthur. As Arwid expresses it, "In our case, necessity was the mother of invention, and the invention worked." ♦

Manitoba poet Tom Saunders began his career as a United Church minister in rural Manitoba in the 1930s and later served as literary editor of the "Winnipeg Free Press". He lives in Winnipeg.



Canada's 'Unmade' Roads

By Dave McIntosh

We call as our first two witnesses to the state of early Canadian roads Thomas Need, a pioneer on Pigeon Lake near Peterborough, Upper Canada, and Dr. Harvey J. Philpot, a Crimean War surgeon who came to Canada as a backwoods doctor.

Here is Need, in his *Six Years in the Bush*, published in London in 1838:

> The distance from Peterboro' to the lake shore was about six miles, over which a friend kindly offered to transport my effects in his waggon. We started about nine o'clock in the morning; I, in my inexperience, believing that though the road through the forest was notoriously bad, a couple of hours at most would suffice for the traject; at the end of that time, however, we had scarcely accomplished half the distance, when the wheels sunk so deep in a slough, that two hours more were taken up in extricating them. The next two miles were accomplished with still more difficulty, for we were obliged repeatedly to make a *corduroy*, or in other words, to cut stakes, and lay them horizontally for the wagon to pass over; but even this scheme failed at last; and at a mile distant from the lake, our teamster declared the waggon inextricably fixed; our only chance was then to loosen the horses, and load them with the goods, which was done; and in this manner we reached the lake, at six o'clock in the evening, covered with mud, hungry, and exhausted.

At another juncture, Need had a one-word description for all Canadian roads: "unmade," as, presumably, in "unmade beds".

Dr. Philpot spent seven years practising in this country before he wrote *Guide to the Canadian Dominion*, published in London in 1871. Here he describes a corduroy road:

> Large quantities of brush and underwood are cut and flung down upon the swampy ground. Upon the top of this are placed, side by side, trunks of trees about 14 or 20 feet in length, and nearly of a size as possible. Over these again, earth and sods are thrown and left to be compacted by the waggons and teams which will eventually pass over it. Should any of my readers be desirous of forming some idea of the sensation produced through their organism by travelling over a "corduroy road," I would suggest to them to get into a Bath-chair and allow themselves to be dragged for a mile or two over the sleepers of a neighbouring railway. . . . I shall not forget, in a hurry, my first experience of a journey over one of these timber pontoons. I hung on with my hands to the wooden seat of our waggon, my feet played vigorously like castanets the "devil's tattoo" upon the floor of the springless conveyance, whilst my teeth rattled one against another like dice in a box; my hat was soon shaken off, and my body jarred and strained in every joint and ligament. . . . My driver kept conversing with me all the time quite unconcernedly.

You get the idea: uncomfortable. But the earliest

HBC Collection

Dog Carioles.

Dog carioles carried travellers across the frozen fields of nineteenth-century Canada.

Canadian roads were worse. They were the portages connecting rivers and lakes and bypassing waterfalls and other obstructions. The main mode of transportation was water; the chief vehicle was the canoe. A road was not needed to seek and carry furs. Stephen Leacock wrote that the trade in beaver skins and not agriculture governed the life and destiny of New France. As the English were to show, "the real secret of domination of the continent lay in emigration and settlement, the occupation of the land, the substitution of the pioneer for the bush-ranger, the farmstead for the trail."

The first Canadian road was probably a seven-mile set of ruts between Cap Rouge and Quebec City built in the late 1600s and today part of the city's Grande Allée. By 1734 it was possible, under good conditions, to travel by coach from Quebec City to Montreal in 4½ days. Halifax was founded in 1749 and that same year had a road connection to Windsor. Joseph Howe wrote in 1837 that most Nova Scotia roads were no more than blazed trails and noted that the Halifax-Pictou postman travelled on foot and shot partridge for sale as he went along. The first road in Newfoundland connected St. John's to Portugal Cove eight miles away; it was laid down in the early 1800s.

Statute labour for road-making dates in Canada from 1793. At that time property owners had to devote up to 12 days a year maintaining the road in front of their homes, especially by marking it in winter. Statute labour (the *corvée* in New France) lasted nearly 150 years. Here is an example from Prince Edward Island, recorded in manuscript in the National Archives by a Mr. Gardiner of Charlottetown:

> In 1820 and for many years since, each man was required to work 6 entire days; the time for meals and travelling to and from the place of Statute Labour was not computed, but every person was to work his full time, but not to exceed 12 hours in any one day, and not a minute allowed but the actual time he was working. A clause in the act forbids the improper practice of placing ropes across the roads during the performance of Statute Labour, and illegally stopping travellers to obtain Rum from them and must on no account whatever be permitted.

The first hated toll road, in Lower Canada, was opened in 1805 and it was not until 1815 that the British North American colonies began setting aside legislative funds for road-building. The first regular stagecoach service between Upper and Lower Canada

A sleigh moves with difficulty along a forest path in the Maritimes in this illustration from "Canadian Pictures", published by the Marquis of Lorne in 1885. Below: The remains of an old plank road in rural Ontario.

was established in 1830; in the same year coach runs began to London and Niagara from Toronto. A Quebec-Toronto letter took a week (much like today) and some passengers walked instead of riding — and arrived ahead of the stage. But the stages lasted until the railways came.

There were early laws against drunk driving and against "furious" driving (speeding). Even with sober drivers, waggons, buggies, carts, buckboards, calèches, sleighs and carioles were tipsy. Sleigh bells were required in winter to warn other drivers in storms. Incidentally, it wasn't wise of a farmer to put up a rail fence along the road. They were often dismantled to help build or repair corduroy roads.

William Dalton hired a waggon and driver to traverse woods near Chippawa in the Niagara district. He described the journey in his *Travels in the United States of America and Part of Upper Canada*, published in Appleby, England, in 1821:

> Our charioteer conducted us over all these places in safety, and even when trees, blown down by the wind or by the ravages of time, lay across our road, we went directly over them.

Early roads were built and maintained by local settlers. The road builders often faced difficult problems, as on this hill road near Glenora, Ontario.

> Marvellous shocks did we often receive when going over these, or over the stumps of others which had been carelessly felled. We were often obliged to stop to mend our vehicle, which was frequently disjointed by the roughness of this road. And it was worth enduring all the shocks to see these horses step over trees nearly breast high without any hesitation or even making a plunge or false step.

Winter was the favourite time of year by far for transportation. The rivers froze and made better highways than even the frozen ruts and mud holes of the regular roads. Philemon Wright in mid-February, 1800, led 5 families in 7 sleighs, with 14 horses and 8 oxen, 80 miles on the Ottawa River to found Hull, Quebec. Nineteenth-century books about Canada abound in examples of winter travel. Here are a few of them:

D'Arcy Boulton in *Sketch of His Majesty's Province of Upper Canada* (London, 1805):

> Travelling here is so habitual, that a farmer and his wife think it nothing extraordinary to make an excursion of six or seven hundred miles in the winter to see their friends; neither does such a trip incur much expense; for they usually carry with them, in their sleigh, provisions for their journey, as well as grain for the horses.

The making of river ice roads caught the eye of George Henry. He wrote in *The Emigrant's Guide, or, Canada As It Is*, published in Quebec City about 1835:

> It is a custom in the winter to make, or rather plant roads on the ice; it is done when the ice first takes by collecting a quantity of green brush, the branches of the fir and cedar trees, making holes in the ice, and planting this brush in groves across the ice to any given place; it thus serves for a road all the winter. At different places, both on the St. Lawrence and on the Ottawa, you will see these roads continuing for miles, and are of the greatest utility.

There were hazards. The winter river roads were so popular that many tavern keepers moved their businesses to temporary shelters on the ice. John MacTaggart, a surveyor on the Rideau Canal, noted in his *Three Years in Canada*, published in London in 1829:

> Sometimes they [tavern keepers] will remain too long in these inns after the thaw comes on, being greedy, and not removing their quarters so long as thay are catching a farthing; floods will therefore come on, sometimes during the night, and sweep all to desolation. Whole families have thus been hurried away and drowned.

The economic aspects of winter roads were remarked by Francis Fairplay in *The Canadas As They Now Are* (London, 1833):

Gigantic Douglas Fir and great Cedars tower over man, horses and cart on a road near New Westminster, British Columbia. Engraving based on a sketch by the Marquis of Lorne in "Canadian Pictures", 1885.

ROAD NEAR NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA. DOUGLAS FIR AND GIGANTIC CEDAR.
(From a Sketch by the Marquis of Lorne.)

Above: A Red River cart moves along the muddy streets of late nineteenth-century Winnipeg. Pedestrians walk on raised wooden sidewalks to keep out of the gumbo. From "Picturesque Canada". Opposite page: This detail from a Lucius O'Brien drawing for "Picturesque Canada" shows the Fraser Canyon road to the Cariboo gold fields clinging to the side of the mountain "like a balcony".

> By the consolidation of the snow, the worst roads are converted into the best for the transport of heavy goods, with great ease to the cattle, while the lighter carriages spin along with a rapidity perfectly unattainable at other times. Indeed, a mild winter is regarded by the Canadians as a great calamity, especially by those situate at a distance from the navigable waters, who at this season convey their produce to market, and bring back their supplies of heavy goods, as potash kettles, liquors, etc., with the most trifling labour compared with what would be required without the snow.

William H.G. Kingston in *Western Wanderings* (London, 1856) gives us a vivid picture of the Lower Canada cariole which differed from the Upper Canada sleigh with its iron runners and high-set framework:

> The cariole, on the contrary, is placed on low runners of wood so that the front part of the body almost touches the ground; and when it meets with any slight impediment in the shape of a heap of snow, it drives it onward until a ridge is formed, over which it has to mount; when coming down on the other side it forms a corresponding hollow. Thus it progresses, covering the whole road with ridges and hollows like the waves of the sea, which gradually increase in size as other carioles pass over them. These hollows are called "cahots," and they and their cause are justly held in abhorrence by all Canadian travellers in winter.

James Inches (*Letters on Emigration to Canada*, Perth, 1836) was the most meticulous critic of farming in this country. Among its major disadvantages were roads "invariably bad". (The greatest disadvantage, he said, was the near impossibility of getting children educated.)

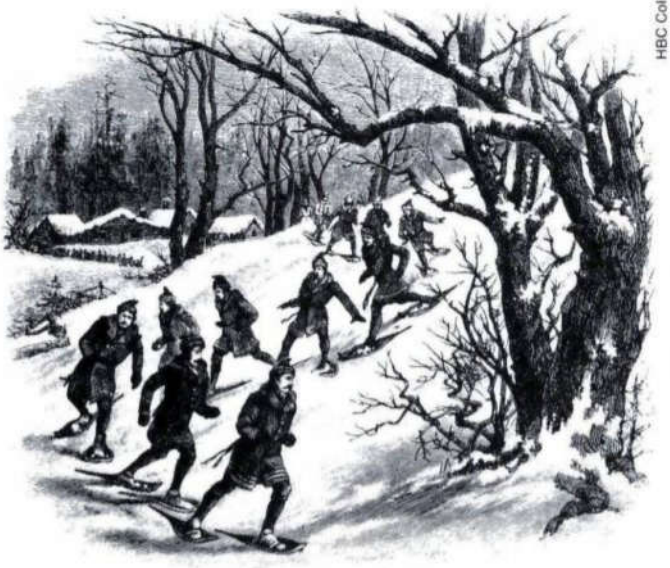
The first wooden plank road began eastward from Toronto in 1835-36. The sawn timbers (hardwoods and white and yellow pine) provided a big improvement over the corduroy road. Stage coaches could do eight miles an hour; horseshoes lasted twice as long. But the plank road endured only two decades because of the rising cost of lumber.

The first macadamized road covered 20 miles between Kingston and Napanee in 1837-39. It comprised layers (from the bottom) of dirt, large gravel, medium gravel and small stone, a process devised by English engineer John L. McAdam in 1815.

The Temiscouata Trail linked the St. John and St. Lawrence Rivers. Abraham Pryor, an American surgeon, made the 280-mile trip and wrote in *An Interesting Description of British America* (Providence, 1819) that so many travellers had perished in this "fearful desert" that the government had installed army veterans on farms 20 miles apart not to farm but to succor weary passers-by.

In 1870, at the time of the Red River Resistance, Colonel Garnet Wolseley led 1,400 troops over the Dawson Trail from Port Arthur to Fort Garry (Winnipeg). Along the 450-mile route (140 miles road, 310 miles water) were 47 portages of which all the major ones were corduroy roads. It took Wolseley 54 days; two years later it was possible to cover the distance in nine days. When the Canadian Pacific Railway was built, the route was abandoned.

The 1858 gold rush in British Columbia led to construction of the 385-mile Cariboo Road from Yale, the head of Fraser River navigation, to Barkerville where Billy Barker sank his fabulous pit in 1861. The road, much of it hanging to the wall of the Fraser Canyon like a balcony, was completed in three years and is still a great interior highway to the north. "Express"



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Snow-Shoe Club in Indian File.

Often in winter it was easier to go on foot with the aid of snowshoes, as in this illustration from "Canadian Pictures", 1885.

stages reached Barkerville from Yale in four days, fresh teams replacing tired horses every 12 to 15 miles.

Between Winnipeg and the Rockies, the prairies were a ready-made, natural highway without obstacles such as heavy forest or extensive rock. Gradually, the Red River cart trails between fur trading posts became regular routes. If a trail became too deeply rutted, the simple solution was to start a new trail beside it. On some busy routes, as many as 20 sets of ruts ambled side by side to the horizon.

The first main cart trail ran from the Red River colony, founded in 1812, to St. Paul, Minnesota, head of navigation on the Mississippi. Later there were thousands of miles of cart trails criss-crossing the prairies, one 900 miles from Fort Garry to Fort Edmonton via Fort Ellice on the Assiniboine and Fort Carlton on the North Saskatchewan. Another ran south from Fort Carlton through what now is Saskatoon to the U.S. outpost at Fort Benton on the Missouri, the Mounties' main supply centre after 274 of them marched west from Pembina in 1874.

The chief memory of the early prairie trails seems not to have been ruts, sloughs and mosquitoes, but the noise of the Red River cart, a box on two wheels and made all of wood. Trains of 500 carts were not unusual and on a bison hunt the natives' supply train might comprise 1,200 carts. Canadian poet Charles Mair was paymaster on a relief project cutting a winter road from Oak Point, 30 miles east of Winnipeg, to Lake of the Woods. Joseph James Hargrave in *Red River* (Montreal, 1871) quotes from letters by Mair about the Red River cart:

> The creaking of the wheels is indescribable; it is like no sound you ever heard in all your life, and makes your blood run cold. . . . To hear a thousand of those wheels all groaning and creaking on at one time is a sound never to be forgotten; it is simply hellish.

Jean d'Artigue (*Six Years in the Canadian North-West*, Toronto, 1882) was a member of the North West Mounted Police on its 1874 march when most of the force's supplies were carried in Red River carts. Of the noise, he wrote:

> A den of wild beasts cannot be compared with its hideousness. Combine all the discordant sounds ever heard in Ontario and they cannot produce anything so horrid as a train of Red River carts. At each turn of the wheel, they run up and down all the notes of the scale in one continuous screech, without sounding distinctly any note or giving one harmonious sound. And this unearthly discord is so loud that a train of carts coming towards you can be heard long before they are seen.

But there was a pleasant side to prairie travel, as described by Peter Mitchell in *The West and North-West*, published in Montreal in 1880:

> I arrived at Portage la Prairie [from Winnipeg] by horse teams in the short space of seven hours — a distance of 65 miles as the crow flies, but as travelled with all the prairie turnings and twistings increased by at least six or eight miles. That was only about one hour longer than it took us to travel on the Pembina Branch Railway, a distance of 62 miles. . . . The roads were simply perfection, the surface was smooth and you could select your own track. When the beaten track did not suit you, you could take the grass of the prairie, and you could drive anywhere except where, as occasionally happened, it was swampy.

As for winter, L.O. Armstrong recorded in his 1880 book, *Southern Manitoba and Turtle Mountain Country*, that he and several colleagues scouted the land by fitting a large box on runners and using it as a mobile horse-drawn home. John Macoun in his 1882 encyclopedic work, *Manitoba and The Great North-West*, found that the greatest disadvantage for the prairie traveller was the thunderstorm which blew down tents and stampeded the horses. ♦

Dave McIntosh is a veteran Canadian journalist with a special interest in the history of settlement. He lives in Ottawa.

The road between Kingston and York, Upper Canada, circa 1830, by James Pattison Cockburn.

Canada's Flying Huskies

By Peter Candy

"Omnia Passim" — Anything Anywhere — was the motto of 437 Squadron, the only Canadian air transport squadron to operate in Europe during World War II. Equipped with DC-3 aircraft commonly known as Dakotas or C47s, the planes were fitted with glider towing hooks in the tail assembly. Known as the "Husky Squadron", 437's crest featured a Husky dog's head in the centre of a maple leaf garland. The husky emblem was most appropriate, as it was so readily identified with Canada and with the squadron's sponsor, the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Husky Squadron was formed on 4 September 1944 at the small wartime airfield of Blakehill Farm in southern England just three months after the D-Day landing in Normandy. Everything with wheels was rolling, everything with wings was flying in the greatest mass movement of men and materials the world had ever seen. Such was the haste that less than half the squadron's compliment of aircraft or crews were in place when the squadron participated in the Arnhem airlift on 17 September. On 21 September 10 Husky Dakotas set out towing Horsa gliders. Six aircraft were shot down. One crew survived a crash landing, another crew bailed out successfully, but 17 airmen were killed.

I arrived in England from Canada aboard the *Isle de France* in October with ground and aircrew reinforcements sent to bring the badly-battered squadron up to full strength. Two more aircraft were lost in October, bringing the total to eight while 24 aircrew members had been killed before the squadron was six weeks old.

Arnhem was a spectacular failure and inflicted on Transport Command some of the heaviest losses of the war. For the Huskies in particular it was a devastating introduction to battle. The film *A Bridge Too Far* dramatized the gamble that failed. Slow moving, low flying unarmed transport planes, especially those with gliders in tow, were easy marks for enemy ground fire.

The Arnhem fiasco over, the squadron switched from glider towing and parachute resupply missions to more normal transportation of men and materials to forward bases on the continent. Landing often on temporary metal strip runways, the Dakotas airlifted medical supplies, jerry cans of high octane fuel, ammunition, rockets and interlocking landing strip steel, returning to England with released prisoners of war and wounded military personnel. The Huskies flew from dawn to dusk, often through very bad weather.

In honour of its association with the Hudson's Bay Company, the aircraft were named after posts that the Company had established in Northern Canada, such as Fort Churchill, Fort Rae, Fort Ross and Fort Norman.

At Arnhem they learned that tow planes should fly higher for safety's sake. The glider is vulnerable and can be shot to pieces by the time it reaches the ground if it performs a long shallow descent. Hence the need to practice these nerve-wracking dives in spite of the risk of a bad landing.

Practice with gliders at Blakehill Farm went at full swing, leading up to the massive Rhine River operation. At airfields all through Southern England similar exercises were taking place. On the final day hundreds of gliders took off, some small Waccos, some large Hamilcar tank-carrying gliders towed by four-engine bombers. This was a very successful operation. The Huskies, with twenty-four Horsa gliders in tow, suffered no losses.

The Rhine crossing was to be the last time gliders would feature in a military operation. Gliders, lacking only engines, were almost as intricate and strongly made as conventional aircraft designed for years of service — yet the glider usually made only one flight, often of less than two hours' duration. In the future, helicopters, then still in the development stage, would replace gliders as a safer, less wasteful and more efficient means of transporting men and material to inaccessible places.

The author with "Fort Norman" at Base 58.

Early in 1945 we moved our base of operations, setting up our little "tent city" at an airfield just south of Waterloo, Belgium. This base was designated as B75, being the 75th airbase set up in Europe since the invasion on 6 June 1944. It had previously been occupied by the German Luftwaffe.

The war ended on 4 May 1945 while we were at B75 — unfortunately in our little country airfield we missed all the celebrations. It was business as usual. Fighter and Bomber Command reduced their operations and prepared to shift their personnel to the Far East where the Japanese war was still raging. Transport Command now settled in for a long haul, taking on the functions of the now shattered pre-war airlines.

We moved to B58, which was at Brussels Municipal Airport. Leaving behind our tents, we moved into an old schoolhouse close to the airfield. The war was over, Europe was in a party mood, and Brussels was a most delightful place to be.

An example of the kind of function the Huskies performed might be illustrated by one of our more noteworthy flights. We took off one morning from B58, Brussels Municipal Airport, with 12 or more British nurses. They were headed for Celle, in North Germany, where they would help with the evacuation of the survivors of the nearby Belsen concentration camp. For the benefit of the nurses we took a leisurely low level cruise over the Rhine Valley to see the burnt-out ruins of the Krupp Works, the much-bombed Ham railway junction and the wrecked bridges over the Rhine. It was a sight that made one wonder how the country could ever be made liveable again.

After the nurses left us at Celle that morning we boarded about 20 British airborne troops for a homeward flight, with a stop in Copenhagen. Here the airfield was occupied by numerous German fighter aircraft seemingly in good flying condition. Picking up some parcels, we flew on across the North Sea to Lincolnshire. The soldiers were dropped off and the aircraft reloaded with large crates and a couple of aircraft wheels for the trip back to B58 that night.

By early June, when our stint to Brussels was completed, about 20 squadron personnel flew to Norway to establish, with three aircraft, the beginning of flight service. We flew the first Allied aircraft to be based in Norway. In addition to daily flights to Stavanger on the west coast of Norway, thrice weekly we made flights to Bardifoss far above the Arctic Circle — up one day, down the next. Bardifoss was one of the largest and most northerly German air bases in Norway.

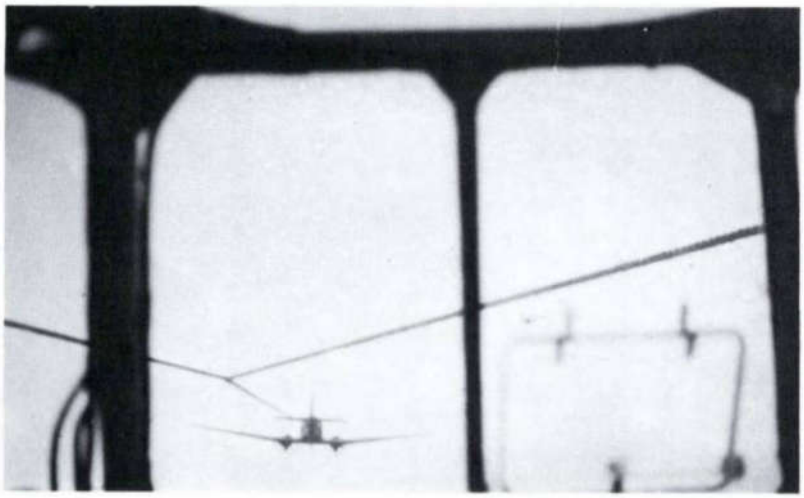
In early November we closed down our operations in Norway and moved on to the famous Croydon aerodrome near London. It was then a grass field without regular runways, surrounded on all sides by housing.

Husky Squadron

When a squadron of troop-carrying Dakotas was formed by the R.C.A.F. in England last fall, the name "Husky" was chosen—and very suitably so. For the husky is a courageous dog who tows heavy loads over great distances, and works hard and well in a team. Almost as soon as it was formed, the squadron distinguished itself by carrying paratroops and supplies to the now-historic battle of Arnhem; and in March they took part in "the greatest airborne invasion of all time" over the Rhine near Wesel.

At their request, the Huskies have been "adopted" by the Hudson's Bay Company—a choice which was as suitable as the selection of their name— and each aircraft is named after a Company fort. The Company, it goes without saying, is proud to be connected with such a fine group of Canadians. Wing Commander J. A. Sproule, D.F.C., is their commanding officer.

Item from "The Beaver", June 1945.



TRANSPORT COMMAND ALBUM

Clockwise from top: A pilot's view of a Horsa glider through the cockpit window, shortly before the Rhine Crossing at Wessel. French prisoners of war board for the journey home. Men of Transport Command celebrate V-E Day. British nurses are dropped off at Celle, Germany, to help with the movement of survivors from Belsen concentration camp, 1945.

An unusual bird's eye view of Base 75, with rows of tents in the foreground.

Men of 437 Squadron relax at Base 75. All photos are from the author's collection.

One almost flew down the narrow streets to land and take off.

In the spring we moved to Odiham where our maintenance base had been for over a year. Almost all the original members had been replaced by permanent force from Canada. Soon we were all redundant and were removed to a Yorkshire depot to wait to be shipped home. Finally in June of 1946 we were homeward bound on the *Aquitania*.

The Husky Squadron evolved over the years through four-engine turbo prop Yukons to the present-day four-engine jet transports. As a squadron with the motto "Anything Anywhere" the Huskies carried everything from refugee boat people to Queen Elizabeth and the Pope. The main job was the transportation of Canadian military personnel throughout Canada and to and from their peace-keeping roles in Europe and the Middle East.

Today, 48 years after its helter skelter formation at a muddy wartime airfield in England, 437 Squadron still flies with its Husky-head crest and motto "Omnia Passim". A new generation of fliers not then born operates huge four-engine jet transports able to fly anywhere in the world. Even more impressive are their aerial tankers capable of mid-air refuelling for flights of supersonic fighter planes two at a time, one from each wing tip. Both the long-distance transport and air refuelling functions of the Huskies were fully utilized during the recent Gulf War. The technology, the power, the capacity of these aircraft are beyond the wildest dreams of oldtimers.

Still flying are several hundred Dakotas scattered from Canada's high North to Africa. These durable Dakotas — some are fifty years old — have outlasted in utility, in economy, and in reliability any other aircraft ever built. ♦

Peter Candy lives in West Vancouver, British Columbia. He joined the RCAF after doing a wartime stint on the HBC supply vessel "Nascopie".

THE PACKET

Letters, Notes and Opinion

The 'Blakney' Mystery

I am writing seeking assistance in identifying a small iron seal (37mm x 24mm) which might have links with the early colonization of Canada.

The seal may be described thus — On the obverse side, a bust portrait of a man holding a dagger (it has been suggested he is a civilian in eighteenth-century dress). Around the circumference: "BRAVE: G.E. BLAKNEY".

The reverse could be interpreted as a "cleric" (a man with a cross hanging from the waist and carrying a staff) and behind him an unidentifiable figure.

The artifact was obviously commemorative of some deed and may have been connected with exploration. Perhaps the name "Blakney" is recorded in this context?

As the seal seems too early for Australia the next best bet might be Canada, perhaps an informal tribute to a local folk hero. The possibilities seem endless but none-the-less intriguing.

I have enclosed two photographs printed in reverse and somewhat magnified.

Bryan O'Driscoll,
Hobart, Tasmania,
Australia.

Editor's note: *Could this be G.E. Blakney's St. Christopher medal? If you have another suggestion, send it to "The Beaver", 450 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB. R3C 0E7 and we will pass it on to our correspondent.*

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Columbia Fur Trade

The History Department, University of Victoria, will host the first Columbia Department Fur Trade Conference in the fall of 1993. The conference will recall the 150th anniversary of the founding of Fort Victoria in 1843 and the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Company's regional headquarters to this new post on Vancouver Island.

The aim of the conference is to bring together, for the first time, scholars working on all aspects of this most westerly region of the North American fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company's Columbia Department operations extended, at various times after 1821, to much of North America west of the Rocky Mountains; in 1853, reflecting the political changes of 1846, the Columbia Department was abolished and replaced with the Western and Oregon departments. Included in this territory were the North West Coast, New Caledonia, and the watersheds of the Stikine, Taku, Skeena, Fraser, Thompson, Okanagan, Columbia, Williamette, Snake, Siuslaw, and Sacramento rivers. The Company's trading activities encompassed the territories of the native people inhabiting the whole of the "Northwest Coast" and much of the "Plateau" and "Subarctic" culture areas.

For further information contact the History Department, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia V8W 2Y2.

The Artist and the Vision

By John Ayre

SCULPTURE OF THE INUIT
By George Swinton. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1992. 288 pp., illus. $75.00.

Tiktak, Rankin Inlet, 1965. From, "Sculpture of the Inuit".

When George Swinton published his *Sculpture of the Eskimo* in 1972 he may have thought he was only producing a timely but provisional text to clean up some of the terribly murky history, involving goodly doses of government propaganda, which then hampered the serious study of Canadian Inuit carving. Certainly few would have guessed then that his book would go through hardback and softback reprintings; or that today with a slightly different name and a revised and expanded text, which features a chapter on the latest art, his book would achieve the status of a near classic.

It is a wonderful irony too that Swinton is now the acknowledged authority on Inuit sculpture. Through the fifties and early sixties, he was the man in the wilderness criticizing an all-white marketing business which demanded personal fealty and adherence to absurd doctrines about the nature, quality and meaning of Inuit art. Swinton in fact got himself into trouble in the late fifties for denouncing the decline of quality and spirit of carvings from a major centre, Povungnituk, even though government officials were muttering the same complaints in their own memos. His sin was not just that he opened an ugly can of worms but that he did so publicly. This supposedly jeopardized a sacred trust which had to do mostly with making sure the flow of cash to the North was unimpeded.

An artist and art professor himself, Swinton gave his loyalty first and foremost to the artist and his vision. He unapologetically put the best of Inuit art in the fine art camp. His use of "sculpture" instead of "carving" is quite deliberate. At the same time he spurned the aesthetic romanticism which overlay — or sometimes crudely covered — the money-generating imperatives which the Inuit artist daily felt. In fact in one amusing section of his book, Swinton outlines the hypothetical reactions to one piece of carving by different people, an inuk, a southern art critic, a faddish collector and himself. Because none of the reactions is the same, the attitudes merely collapse around and make the art itself rise all the more resplendent out of crass subjectivity.

Despite its remarkable durability, though, this is not by any means a perfect book. As in the old version, the text and the catalog of 909 photos of carvings are not terribly well integrated. Swinton, for example, mentions the deteriorating quality of carving before James Houston arrived in the North in the late forties to revive it. While he acknowledges on page 129 that some carvings were pinguaq ("play things"), only an informed reader would be able to work back to page 14 to find a photo, which is unidentified, of an example dated at 1949. One thing is clear about this miserable carving of a dog. It speaks so little of artistic genius, the sudden rise of the carving enterprise to world-wide attention by the early fifties is all the more impressive.

While strong in the historical and formal aspects of the art, Swinton fails to give the reader much explanation about the mythology and meaning of the carvings which, following the practice of the artists themselves, he leaves untitled. He often groups similar pieces together so that the reader can see formal affinities. He offers groups of bears or muskoxen or mothers with chil-

dren or hunters with spears. But there is very little sense of why carvers from widely different areas were attracted to similar themes. There is for example the whole area of the Sedna myth which has haunted contemporary Inuit art since the late fifties. The reader sees all manner of beings with fish tails, male and female, but can never know if this is authentic expression of mythology or part of a northern *Little Mermaid* fantasy aimed at southern customers.

While Swinton has added the gallery location and serial numbers of many of the pieces, this is not a consistent process. Questions remain about the location of other key works he illustrates. There is an undeniably nightmarish aspect here because so many of the old pieces, which have neither names nor E-numbers scratched on them, were frequently misidentified. Curators now play an exasperating algebra by identifying repeated motifs and techniques of major artists. The process, alas, is only logical and never certain. Swinton has reattributed several pieces from his old edition but there are still mistakes. Akeeaktashook for example could not have done the 1954 piece (#301) in Port Harrison because he moved in the now notorious migration to Ellesmere Island in 1953 where he died in a hunting accident in July 1954. A distinctive bird piece (#447) is probably not by Lukta of Cape Dorset in 1954 or by an unknown Port Harrison carver as elsewhere identified (on page 14 of *The Beaver*, Autumn 1967). What is known for sure is that the piece turned up at a Northern Affairs display at the Stratford Festival in early July 1959. It was there that Cape Dorset artists Kiawak Ashoona and Eeegeevudluk Pootoogook carved before an audience in an alcove specially cooled for them to 13 degrees C. to simulate Baffin Island conditions. Although the bird might easily have been borrowed from a museum for display, it is clearly identified in a newspaper photo feature as the work of Kiawak who actually may have made it in Stratford.

In this context Swinton would relish the question of authenticity which has plagued Inuit art from the beginning. If this bird actually *was* made in southern Ontario, would its place of manufacture spoil its authenticity? Does an Inuit carving *really* have to be completed, as was once expected, by a pureblood inuk in local stone with crude tools in a windswept hillside overlooking the Hudson Strait? As Swinton shows in his last chapter, many younger artists like David Reuben Piqtoukun have already provided their answer. Some live permanently in the south and work some very nice brown soapstone imported from Brazil. Yet, in turn, they strain for a distinctive Inuit look by using shamanistic themes which are now, like Renaissance madonnas, sometimes clichéd. The worst of it looks too much like New Age art which itself emphasizes shamans and their misty Western counterparts, Merlins and troubadours. That is where Swinton leaves the reader, with the younger artists still wrestling between tradition and present identity. If they sometimes fail, they are at least struggling in the right territory. To reshape identity, to remake a new image from an old one, is, after all, the basis of authentic art.

John Ayre is writing a history of the development of Inuit art in the 1948-1962 period. He lives in Guelph, Ontario.

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Filling In The Map, 1791 - 1795

By Christon Archer

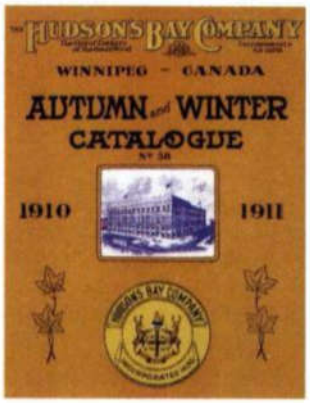
VANCOUVER'S VOYAGE
Charting the Northwest Coast, 1791-1795

By Robin Fisher with photographs by Gary Fiegehen, Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver, Toronto, 1992. 131 pp., illus. $35.00.

As an offshoot of the international conference held in April 1992, in honour of the bicentennial of George Vancouver's voyage, Robin Fisher took advantage of the occasion to publish a volume that would reach a wide popular audience. Profusely illustrated with reproductions of eighteenth-century plates and a series of brilliant coastal studies by photographer Gary Fiegehen who retraced Vancouver's course in British Columbia waters, the book appeals to the eye as well as the mind. Fisher complements academic studies such as W. Kaye Lamb's authoritative *The Voyage of George Vancouver* published in four volumes by the Hakluyt Society in 1984, and sums up his own theories based upon lengthy research about exploration and native/European relations in the early history of the Northwest Coast. This is by no means a coffee table book designed simply to showcase British Columbia scenery.

Fisher commences with the requisite statements anticipated in 1992 concerning "exploration" versus "encounter" and he presents an upbeat description of the indigenous societies and lifestyle. The natives, confident and assured, "stood on the shore" to receive European visitors who were "often tense and uncom-

GIFTS FROM THE PAST



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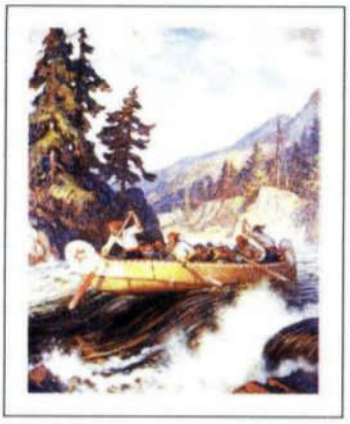
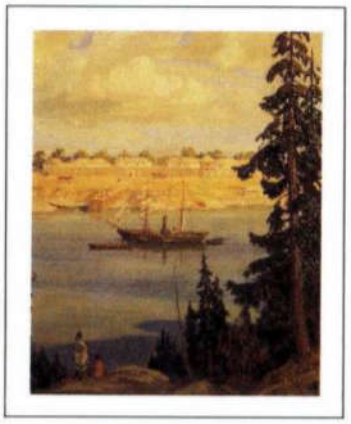
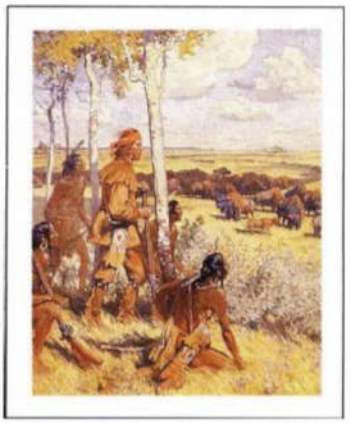


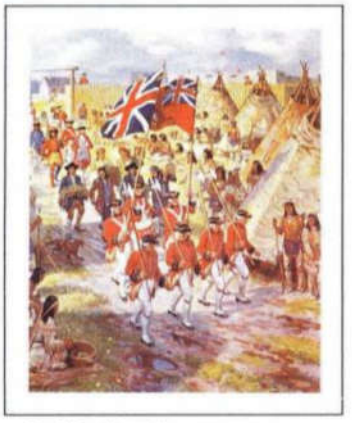
A. *Chief Trader Archibald McDonald Descending the Fraser*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



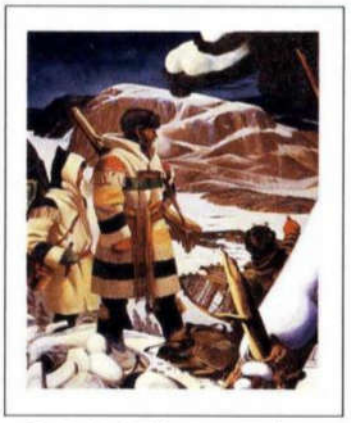
B. *S.S. "Beaver" Off Fort Victoria*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



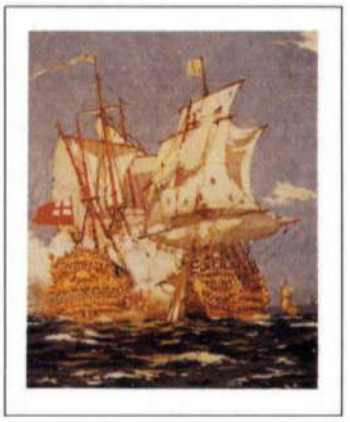
C. *Kelsey Sees the Buffalo*
By C.W. Jefferys.



D. *Trading Ceremony at York Factory*
By A. Sherriff Scott.



E. *R.M. Ballantyne and Chief Trader George Barnston at Tadoussac, 1846*
By Charles Comfort.



F. *Battle in the Bay, 1697*
By Norman Wilkinson.

Over the years the Hudson's Bay Company has commissioned distinguished Canadian painters to create works depicting important events in the long history of the Company. Among the most popular works in the HBC collection are those pictured above by C.W. Jefferys, A. Sherriff Scott, Norman Wilkinson and Charles Comfort.

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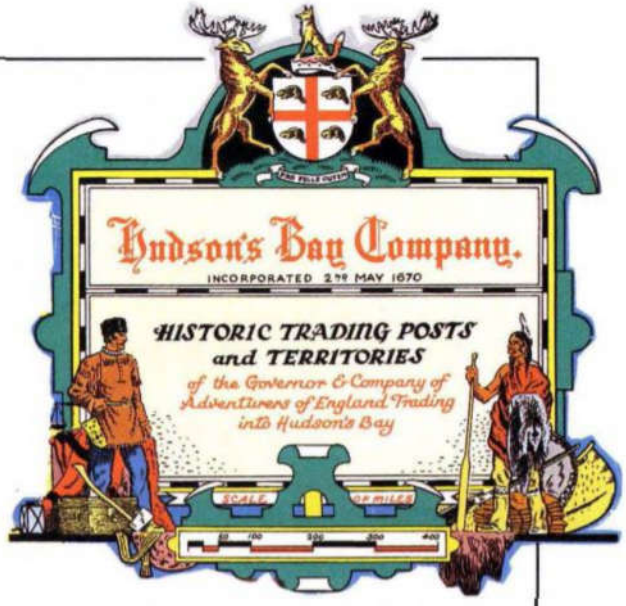

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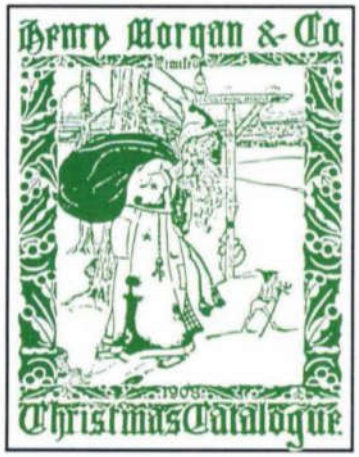

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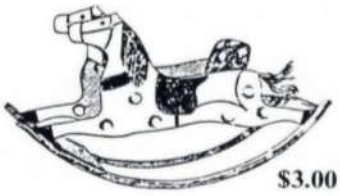

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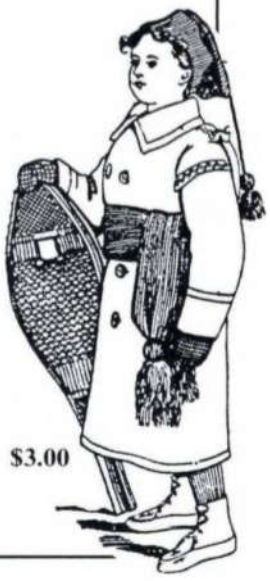

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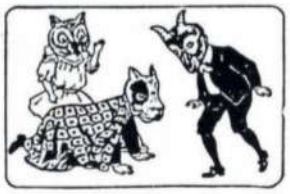

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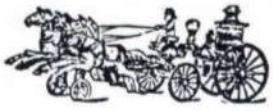

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fortable." While this may have been the case in some first meetings, Fisher might have noted that more often the natives sallied forth from their shores in seagoing canoes to intercept the Europeans at sea where they took the initiative to promote commercial exchanges. In this respect, the natives appeared to control the exchange of the valuable sea otter furs. Indeed, Fisher argues that the natives maintained the initiative and shaped the European presence to advance their own needs. While one might like to accept this view, the evidence also shows a darker side to the new relationships. Highly competitive, the maritime fur trade became a much more one-sided affair as Europeans used cannon and muskets to compel the natives to trade valuable sea otter pelts for inferior goods. Distant from the restraints of their own legal systems, British and American fur traders often threatened violence that condemned the natives to a distinctly subservient role. Some captains opened fire on native villages and many expressed highly negative views about the Northwest Coast peoples.

Like many historians, Fisher does not find George Vancouver an easy subject. Austere, somewhat cold, distant, and dedicated primarily to his coastal surveys, Vancouver appeared to lack the passion or the contagious enthusiasm evident in some other explorers. At the same time, the loss of Vancouver's original manuscript journals has tended to freeze impressions and to make the historian's task more difficult. While Fisher describes Vancouver as ". . . not a very sympathetic or perceptive observer of native culture on the coast," one should remember that he did intend to include a final chapter on ethnography in his published voyage account which could not be reconstructed after his death because of the impossible disorganization of his notes. Fisher finds Menzies a more perceptive reporter on native cultures — particularly since he avoided conjectures on the possibility of epidemic disease that may have caused significant population decline. Although Vancouver referred specifically to smallpox and made frequent references to the deleterious impact of European cultures upon natives of the Pacific world, Fisher dismisses those "recent scholars" on the subject whom he describes as having reached uncritical conclusions on the evidence of depopulation. Contrary to Fisher's opinions, it may be argued that Vancouver was a highly perceptive observer of demographic questions concerning the native cultures who was in many respects much ahead of his times.

Based upon his sources, Fisher reflects some traditional British views about the Spanish explorers whom he correctly identifies as enjoying less in the way of contemporary technology and equipment. Since their voyages, with the exception of Alejandro Malaspina, originated on the isolated Pacific Coast of the Mexican colony, this might be expected. However, Fisher need not have repeated older views expressed by British Columbia historians that in their explorations the Spaniards were "tentative" and that they achieved less than the British. In fact, the detailed charts of Vancouver's contemporaries, Dionisio Alcala Galiano and Cayetano Valdés illustrate a level of technical competence not unlike that achieved by Vancouver's small boat expeditions. Similarly, Fisher tends to accept British views regarding the frustrating negotiations surrounding the diplomacy of Vancouver and Spain's representative, Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra.

Concerning the Nootka Sound natives, Fisher grapples with the shortcomings of the European evidence to unravel the motivations and reactions of Chief Maquinna and his people. Suddenly removed from the isolated tranquility of their own world and thrust into what was a trading entrepot and focus for the complex diplomacy between Spain and Britain, it is difficult to comprehend the native responses. While Fisher establishes highly plausible arguments for Maquinna's behaviour and his obvious fear of the Spanish commander, Esteban José Martinez, who was responsible for the death of Chief Callicum, it is difficult to reach hard conclusions. In his negotiations, Maquinna became a deft manipulator of the Europeans. In 1794 when he thought his people were in danger from an attack by Chief Wickananish of Clayoquot Sound, contrary to Fisher's view about Maquinna's refusal to return to Yuquot, the chief did not hesitate to take his people to reside temporarily under the protection of Spanish guns.

Fisher maintains a thesis found throughout his scholarly research that the natives gained benefits from the maritime fur trade to offset negatives such as the introduction of epidemic diseases and increased violence. In preparing a balance sheet, Fisher argues that the advantages of new wealth and European implements contributed to the florescence of artistic and cultural expression. Although George Vancouver most likely would have disagreed, Fisher expresses the conclusion that at the time of Vancouver's Northwest Coast expedition, the natives were equal partners in the fur trade. For Fisher, the disease and other disasters that befell native cultures came later.

Fisher's essay presents a striking visual and verbal introduction to Vancouver's voyage and to the early history of the Northwest Coast. After many years of research on the history of Pacific exploration and early British Columbia, Fisher has set the tone for popular perceptions of the period and of the explorer George Vancouver. While some of his conclusions about the impact of "discovery" or "encounter" may not be shared by all academic historians, Fisher's ideas are clear and his arguments are backed by a solid understanding of the period. The book will be essential reading both for specialists and general readers.

Christon I. Archer is Professor of History at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta.

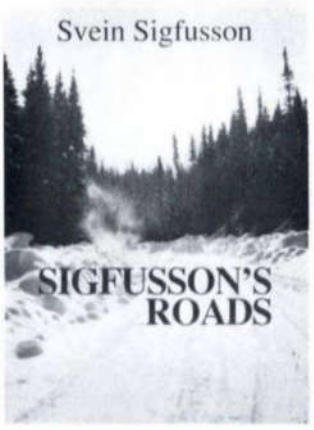
The Writers as Readers

How many of your favourite books lately have been about natives, war, or Newfoundland? Those seemed to be the hottest topics in an unscientific "Book of the Year" poll taken as 1992 came to an end.

Readers of Canadian history have a lot to choose from these days. The shortlist of non-fiction nominees for the Governor-General's Award was dominated this year as in most years by histories. (Is that because historians write better? Or because history professors too often dominate the juries, as has been alleged?) This year's prize-winner, Maggie Siggins's *Revenge of the Land*, follows the fortunes and misfortunes of all the owners of one single Saskatchewan farm during a turbulent century. The other historical nominees were Michael Bliss's *Plague*, about an 1885 smallpox epidemic in Montreal, and Michael Marrus's *Mister Sam*, a biography of Samuel Bronfman. (The fourth nominee was *Inside John Gunther*, a biography by Ken Cuthbertson.)

Other books about Canadian history or by Canadian historians were prominent on the bestseller lists in the weeks before Christmas 1992. These days, books on Canadian history come from many writers with diverse literary styles. They range from national subjects to local histories. They include a growing number of minority and native stories and writers. And there are novels (and also films) to consider as well.

With such a wealth of good reading to choose from, it seemed a good time to ask a sampling of Canadian writers and historians what *they* thought of as the year's best. The request form I sent in November encouraged nominations of recent books about Canadian history. But mostly I wanted to know what books had recently impressed people whose own writing is about Canadian history, particularly if the books might be of interest to *The Beaver*'s 40,000 subscribers.



A lot of writers had a hard time deciding what to nominate. "It is like being asked if I prefer Jane Austen to Albert Camus," wrote Toronto writer and social activist June Callwood. Many stressed that they had not read all the new books they would like to. Some reported they had been so busy with a specific project that they had read almost nothing outside it, or even that they felt they had written more than they had read lately.

Still, an eclectic mix of suggestions came in, some trying hard to stay within my guidelines, some freely inventive. Big bestsellers were scarce among the titles suggested, and of the three histories nominated for the Governor-General's Award, only Michael Bliss's *Plague* made this list, nominated by Toronto novelist and historian John Ralston Saul. All of the nominees, however, had their own suggestions.

Michael Bliss nominated *Sigfusson's Roads* by Svein Sigfusson, whom Bliss describes as "the great winter road builder of Manitoba and northern Ontario, now an octogenarian." The book (published by Watson and Dwyer of Winnipeg) he calls "a distinguished Canadian entrepreneurial adventure and a beautiful memoir." Michael Marrus reported he had been most impressed recently by British historian Martin Gilbert's *Churchill: A Life*, a one-volume summary of "a kind of historical landmark," his multi-volume biography of the great statesman. Maggie Siggins of Regina liked Howard Leeson's biography *Grant Notley: The Social Conscience of Alberta*.

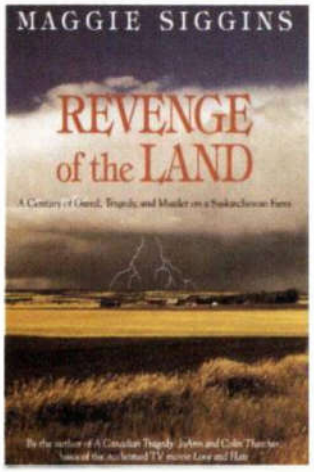
Other nominations testified to the growing interest in books about (and sometimes by) the aboriginal peoples of Canada. Historian and *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* editor Ramsay Cook recommended Daniel K. Richter's *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: the Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* as "brilliant, well-written, and exhaustively researched." Olive Dickason of Alberta praised Ronald Wright's *Stolen Continents: The "New World" Through Native Eyes since 1492* as "a highly readable overview of the takeover of the Western hemisphere through the experiences of the Inca, Aztec, Maya, Cherokee, and Iroquois." For his part, Ronald Wright proposed *People of the Pines*, a study of the Mohawks of Oka by journalists Geoffrey York and Loreen Pindera.

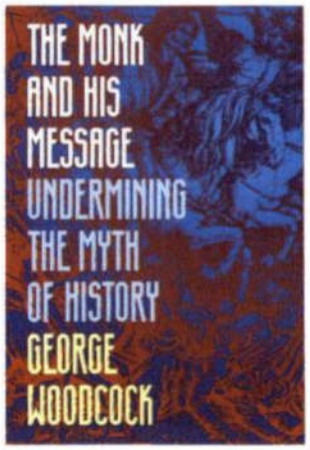
Maritime historian Eric Sager of Victoria admired a work of "anthro-

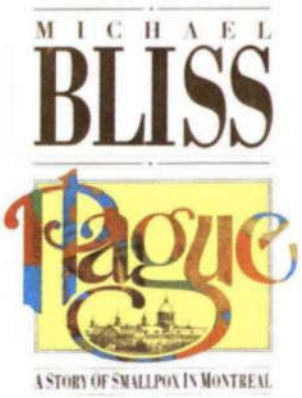
pology and history and a major contribution to 'oral' history," Julie Cruikshank's *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Women* which recently won the Canadian Historical Association's annual John A. Macdonald prize in Canadian history. And writer, storyteller, and native activist Lenore Keeshig-Tobias expanded the boundaries of the survey by nominating what she called "the year's best of the worst." She was offended by the wild-Indian stereotype in *Revenge of the Tribes*, a book for young readers adapted from Pierre Berton's history of the War of 1812. "The menacing cover would scare the heck out of any little Canadian kids and shame any Native kid," she wrote.

Several writers I polled had been moved by books about war's impact on Canada. Desmond Morton cited Sandra Gwyn's study of Canadians in World War I, *Tapestry of War*, which he liked almost as much as her earlier *The Private Capital*. Writer and community organizer Jim Lotz of Halifax admired *Reap the Whirlwind*, a history of the Canadian bomber crews of World War II, which he called "a unique co-operative venture between a novelist [Spencer Dunmore] and an historian [William Carter], combining the best of both." As one of the historians who testified at the Senate Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee hearings last June, Carter probably would not second the nomination of Montreal historian Graeme Decarie. "How many Canadian works of history attract a large audience, provoke discussion, and do not need to be required reading?" Decarie asked. "My nomination is *The Valour and the Horror*."

A very different film about Canadians in wartime was the nomination of West Coast historian Lynne Bowen, whose most recent book is *Muddling Through*, a history of the turn-of-the-century Barr colonists of Saskatchewan. "A prairie scene in the early minutes of the movie *Bye Bye Blues* directed by Anne Wheeler [now available on video] made me realize that Canadians have had few chances to see their own history portrayed in film. The scene showed little boys playing shinny. Although I had never played shinny, I experienced a flash of recognition and said, 'This is about me. This is about us.'"







June Callwood, who found choosing hard, declared an historical novel, Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, "the best book ever written in this country." Historical novelist Kit Pearson nominated Farley Mowat's "illuminating and eloquent" World War II memoir *My Father's Son*. And writer Daniel Francis admired "a family history which is also a meditation on war and place," David Macfarlane's *The Danger Tree*, as "the best book of non-fiction produced in Canada in several years."

Macfarlane's book is about war and also about Newfoundland, so it hit two of the hot topics of this survey. Several other Newfoundland books were recommended. *Chips and Gravey* by William Gough (Houndslow Press) was described by the Master Gatherer, anthologist John Robert Colombo, as a comic novel in which the past hobbles the present and history is held at bay. Novelist Helen Fogwill Porter admired Bernice Morgan's first book *Random Passage* (Breakwater Books), an historical novel of early settlement at Cape Random (Cape Freels), Bonavista Bay North. And the only book to receive two nominations in this survey was Gerald L. Pocius's *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland*. It was the choice of two professors, geographer Graeme Wynn of U.B.C. and historian Donald Akenson of Queen's, and from the title it sounds scholarly and "difficult." But Akenson called it "a truly wondrous evocation of place that your readers should not miss."

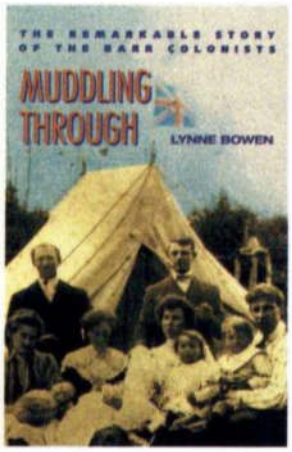
The rest of the nominations are harder to group. Like Michael Marrus, several writers went abroad for their choices. Writer and biographer Marian Fowler plumped for "an epic work," *Means of Ascent*, the second volume of Robert A. Caro's massive biography of Lyndon B. Johnson. Myrna Kostash of Alberta, the author of *All of Baba's Children* who is just completing a book about Eastern Europe, recommended a book that at first glance sounds most unpromising, but which recently won a Pulitzer Prize. *Maus* by Art Spiegelman is "a comic book about the Holocaust in which the Jews are mice and the Nazis are cats . . . Stunning."

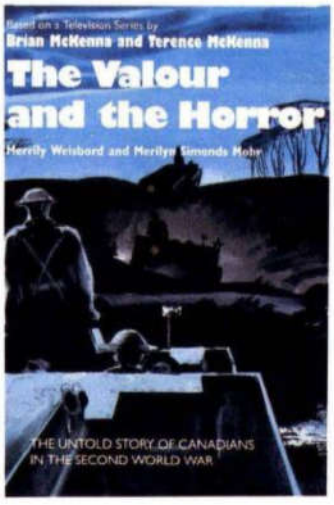
Journalist and Trudeau biographer Christina McCall recently discovered that "exemplary history for the general reader," James Morris's three-volume history of the British Empire: *Pax Britannica*, *Heaven's Command*, and *Farewell the Trumpets*. And cultural historian Maria Tippett, whose recent *By A Lady* studies Canadian women painters, chose *Real Presences* by George Steiner, "which helped shape the way I viewed Canada's cultural past and present."

Two nominations focused on Canadian workers and radicals. Montreal writer Merrily Weisbord suggested *The Un-Canadians* by Len Sher, "a fascinating book about the Canadian blacklist" of the 1950s. Historian Gregory Kealey liked *The Working Class Experience*. Nominating the work of his friend and colleague Bryan Palmer "no doubt seems self-serving," he wrote, "but I don't know of a better effort."

Writer and novelist Heather Robertson of Toronto recommended Ron Graham's *The French Quarter*, which (like the books by Macfarlane, Mowat, and Gwyn), explores the past by mixing personal or family history with great events, in this case the evolution of French Canada. Historian Jack Granatstein nominated "a superb piece of writing and research," John English's *The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester B. Pearson 1949-72*, the new volume in what Granatstein considers one of the very best Canadian biographies.

My recent co-author Janet Lunn [*The Story of Canada*] nominated *The History of Dinner* by "the anthropologist of daily life." Margaret Visser, while another historical novelist, Marianne Brandis, liked a work of local history, *Mr. Meritt's Ditch: A Welland Canals Album* by Roberta M. Styran and Robert B. Taylor (Boston Mills Press). George Elliott Clarke, editor of a recent anthology of Black Nova Scotian writing, *Fire on the Water*, chose *The Spirit of Africville* by the Africville Genealogical Society (Formac), a collection of articles and photographs about the Halifax black community which was bulldozed in the 1960s "in the name of urban renewal and social engineering."




Based on a Television Series by
Brian McKenna and Terence McKenna
The Valour and the Horror
Merrily Weisbord and Marilyn Simonds Mohr
THE UNTOLD STORY OF CANADIANS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Finally, George Woodcock of Vancouver noted that I had asked everyone not to nominate his or her own work, "but I feel that by far the best book of history published this year is my own *The Monk and his Message*." From a less distinguished writer (and historian and critic), I might have been reluctant to accept such self-promotion (and I do note that no one seconded Woodcock's nomination). In a similar vein, Peter Waite, currently deep in the history of Dalhousie University, could think of no recent work he wanted to nominate but promised to have his publisher send me his own book on Prime Minister R.B. Bennett. And *that* self-promotion seemed justified after June Callwood wrote that if she could not nominate *The Wars* as the year's best (because it is 15 years old), she would go for Waite's *The Man from Halifax*, his much praised life of the ill-fated nineteenth-century Prime Minister, John Sparrow Thompson.

As the nominations in this survey came in, I was pleased to see mention of some books I had admired — and intrigued by many titles unknown to me. There is a lot of reading I now want to do. And I wonder what suggestions readers of *The Beaver* would have. Next year, perhaps, a reader's choice poll.

* * *

***The Valour and the Horror* update:**

I finished my previous column late last October without knowing that renewed Senate hearings and the CBC Ombudsman's report would make *The Valour and the Horror* the biggest news story of November. My column analyzed the June hearings and the role of historians in them, but I should add three small items.

Cliff Chadderton was, as I said, a key organizer of opposition to the film, and he wanted the government

to stamp down on it. But he wanted a House of Commons Committee, not a Senate one, to be the forum. Even though the Senate Subcommittee took up precisely the job he proposed to have done somewhere else, he disassociated himself from its hearings. I missed this little nuance of veterans' politics (as did most of the newspaper reports I was using) when I wrote that Chadderton approached the Senate.

I also wrote about the fear the Senators seemed to be causing among some government-employed historians, W.A.B. Douglas, who heads the Directorate of History at the Department of National Defence, has declared for the record that his staff may speak and write as they wish without in any way jeopardizing the Directorate, because the Directorate's terms of reference ensure its freedom. I am glad to have his statement alongside the concerns I documented, for his attitude seems to me precisely the right one for an organization that must resist pressure from all sides.

The Valour and the Horror can be rented on videotape from any National Film Board of Canada outlet. And the companion book by Merilyn Mohr and Merrily Weisbord was published by Harper Collins.

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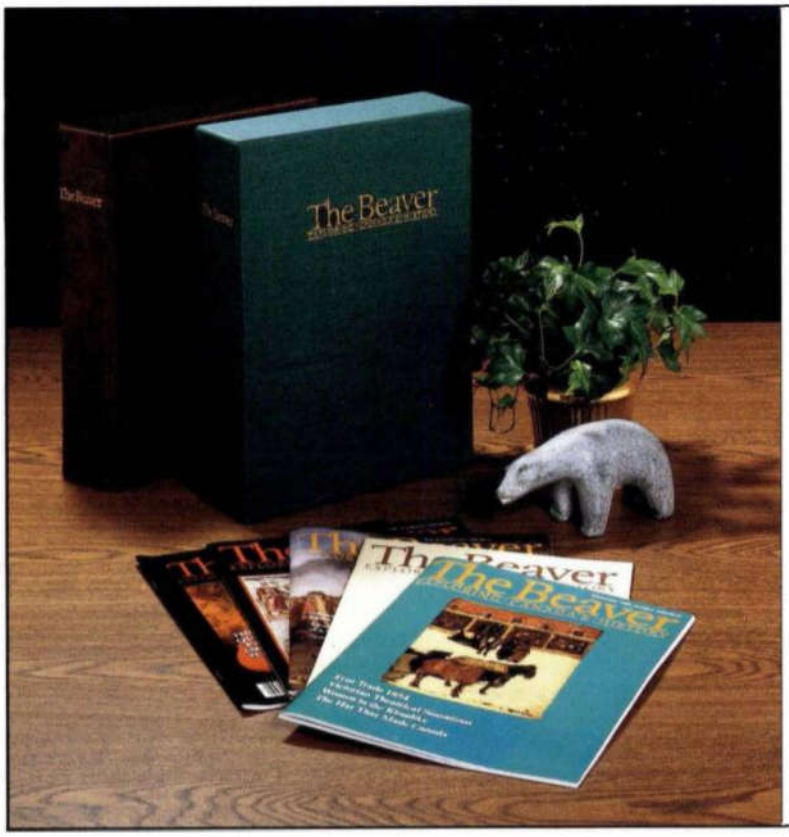

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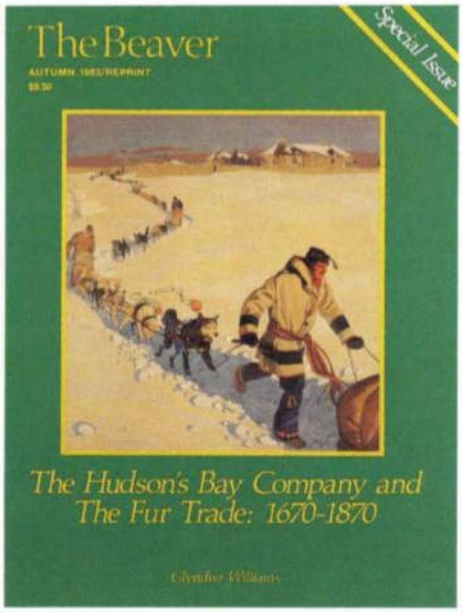

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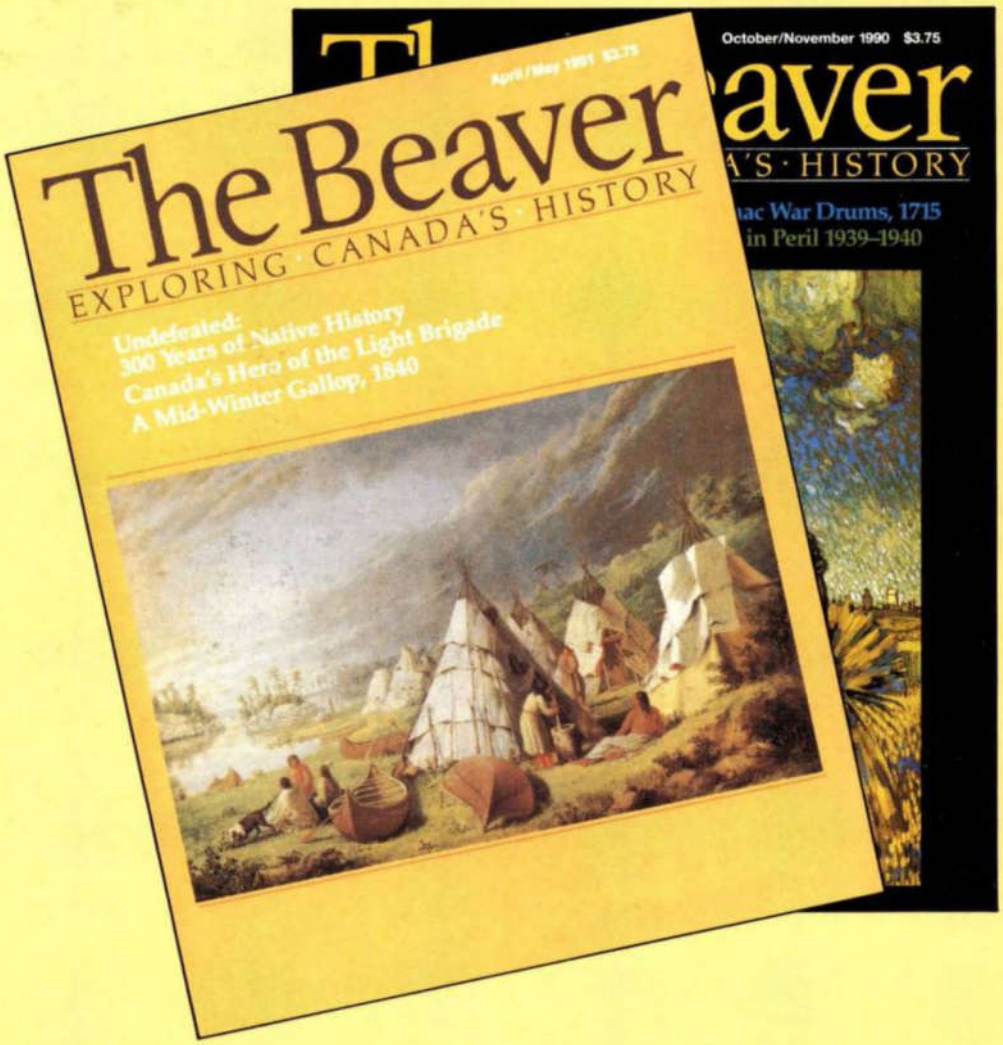

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